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FREE DISCUSSIONS ON FREE THINKERS

VOL. I.

EVENINGS WITH THE SKEPTICS

OR

FREE DISCUSSION ON FREE THINKERS

BY

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'Believe it, my good friend, to love Truth for Truth's sake is the principal part of human perfection in this world, and the seed-plot of all other virtues.'—LOCKE

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VOL. I.

PRE-CHRISTIAN SKEPTICISM

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TO THE

REV. AUGUSTUS JESSOPP, D.D.

Late Head Master of Norwich School

THESE VOLUMES ARE DEDICATED

AS A SLIGHT TOKEN OF

PROFOUND GRATITUDE AND ESTEEM

PREFACE.

THE primary intent of the author of this work was to fill, however imperfectly, what he considered a gap in the history of philosophy. Since the publication of Staudlin's well-known monograph on the subject (Leipzig, 1794) no work has appeared in modern literature having for its object a complete and impartial history of Skepticism. Attempts have been made both in Germany and France to supply what has been generally recognised as a want, but they have either been partial, as in the case of Dr. Tafel's work, or abortive, as in the projected works of MM. Bartholmess and Émile Saisset.

Another motive that actuated the author was to suggest a new method for the investigation and classification of philosophic thinkers. Most persons must have remarked the confused appearance presented by ordinary histories of philosophy, in which thinkers of all kinds are huddled together without any regard to intellectual affinities or similarities. It seems at least worth considering whether some elementary basis of classification might not be adopted which would subdivide philosophers according to their psychological idiosyncrasies. Thus they might be arranged, as Diogenes Laertius remarked, into two main classes, Synthetic and Analytic, or, using the more usual terms, Dogmatists and Skeptics—denoting respectively those in which constructive or disintegrating instincts preponderate. Such a division, although not rigidly logical, seems the best of which the subject is

capable. Probably few remarkable intellects have ever existed as to which it would be impossible to determine whether their bent, their native unbiassed propensity, was Dogmatic or Skeptical. Hence the following work, taking as its subject eminent examples of the analyzing, inquiring type of intellect, endeavours to show the similarity of its procedures under varying conditions of time, race, country, diversity of dogmatic and social environment, &c. Its readers will learn a lesson surely worth acquiring—that Skepticism—the exercise of the questioning and suspensive faculty—is confined to no period, race, religious or secular belief. In itself the energy is altogether natural, and its manifestation, even when extreme, ought to arouse no harsher feelings than are evoked by other developments of human speculation which also share a natural basis and starting-point.

Genuine Skepticism may be regarded from two standpoints.

1. In relation to dogma, it is the antithetical habit which suggests investigation—the instinct that spontaneously distrusts both finality and infallibility as ordinary attributes of truth. It inculcates caution and wariness as against the confidence, presumption, self-complacent assurance of Dogmatists. Thus interpreted, it is needless to point out the importance of its functions. A history of doubters and free-thinkers is in fact the history of human enlightenment. Every advance in thought or knowledge has owed its inception and impulse to inquiring doubt. Hence it would be idle to deny or attempt to minimize the historical importance of Skepticism, or the perennial antagonism between doubt and dogma—the dynamic and static principles of all human knowledge.

2. Considered in itself Skepticism implies (1) Continuous search, (2) Suspense, or so much of it as is needful as an incentive to search. This is the literal meaning of the word as well as its general signification in Greek philosophy.

We thus perceive that the Skeptic is not the denier or dogmatic Negationist he is commonly held to be. Positive denial is as much opposed to the true Skeptical standpoint as determinate affirmation. One as well as the other implies fixity and finality. Each, when extreme and unconditional, makes a claim to omniscience. Now it is in order to wean back, if possible, a much-abused philosophical term to its primitive use, as well as to conform to the increasing and true taste of spelling foreign words in their own manner, that the author has adopted in this work the orthography of *Skeptic* and *Skepticism*. Whatever meaning, therefore, his readers may have been accustomed to attach to the more common *Sceptic*, &c., he begs them to understand that a Skeptic in these volumes is above all things an inquirer. He is the indomitable, never-tiring searcher after truth—possibly one who believes, at least one who affects, search more than he does absolutely definitive attainment.

Most men are willing to accept the inquiring attribute of the Skeptic. What they dislike is Skeptical suspense; but a small amount of reflection might convince them that if the mind is to exercise its greatest instinct of continual search, it can only do so by virtue of some motive-influence, *i.e.* a consciousness of defective knowledge. Unhappily there are few speculative truths, even of those commonly believed, which do not on examination reveal a sufficiency of human nescience to justify further investigation, while it is evident that not a few minds are so constituted as to be impatient of definitive certitude of any kind. It would be difficult, *e.g.*, to propound a truth which would satisfy the exigeant requirements of a Montaigne, or could withstand the unscrupulous Eristic of a Sokrates.

The true Skeptic may hence be defined as the seeker after the absolute. He is the searcher who must needs find, if he find anything, not only demonstrable and infallible, but unconditionally perfect truth. As such he may plead com-

panionship in thought and aspiration with other human seekers after the Infinite. He becomes allied with religionists, with mystics, with idealists, with philosophic hunters after the *Ding an sich*, with persistent inquirers of every type whose ostensible goal transcends their actual powers. That such a seeker need not be impeded in his energies by the full consciousness of their inconclusive result is evident. He shares the ardent temperament—the passion for search for its own sake, common to all minds of his own type. What Mystic, *e.g.*, was ever deterred in his pursuit by the impossibility of his desiderated consummation—complete union with deity? or what religionist ever considered himself thwarted in his endeavours after spiritual perfection by the self-evident futility of his efforts? This definition of Skepticism as truth-search may serve to remove some of the objections made against it as an antagonistic influence to religion, and especially to Christianity. Taking Christianity in its primary and true sense, as we find it embodied in the words and life of Christ, this supposed conflict of its dictates with reasonable inquiry after truth is nothing else than an ecclesiastical fiction. Certainly the claims of a religion which asserts itself as the Truth, which bases freedom upon truth-discovery, whose Founder's profession was that He came to bear witness to the truth, and which appealed to the reason and conscience of mankind, *i.e.* to their instincts of spiritual and moral truth, can never be fairly represented as opposed to truth-search. To the further objection, does not the definition of Christianity as a Revelation render further search needless? an answer is given in the course of this work. Here it may be remarked that as a matter of fact hardly one of the thinkers commonly accounted Skeptics, notwithstanding their aptitudes for free inquiry and their impatience of dogma, have ever thought of impugning the two great commandments of the law proclaimed by Christ to be the basis of His religion. What has been most affected

by Skeptical disintegration has not been Christianity so much as its undue ecclesiastical development.

A passing reflection is hereby suggested as to the utility of Skepticism, both suspensive and inquiring, in meeting some dogmatic tendencies of our present-day thought. Notwithstanding no small outcry as to the diffusion of Skepticism, it may be doubted whether the chiefest and most mischievous propensities of our time are not Dogmatic rather than Skeptical. Certainly a century that has given birth to such dogmas as the infallibility of the Pope and the immaculate conception of the Virgin—that has witnessed the abnormal development of doctrine and ritual which has characterised some professedly Protestant churches, can scarcely be classed as a *Sæculum Skepticum*. And even if the complaint of increased unbelief could be shown to be sustained, it might in part be justified on the principle of Sextos Empeirikos, that Skepticism is always found in proportion to the extent of the Dogmatism that has engendered it.

Nor is it only theologians that are thus unduly dogmatic. Our science teachers, with some few exceptions, seem just as liable to assume a tone of infallibility in respect of theories inherently incapable of demonstration; while the Agnostic, who proclaims all truth to be impossible, and thereby seeks to justify intellectual apathy, is in reality equally guilty of arrogating omniscience. It is doubtful to which of these three types of dogmatists a due infusion of the cautious, self-distrustful, persistently energising spirit of Skepticism would be most beneficial.

Such appear to the author to be the general considerations calculated to explain to his readers the standpoint, purport, and intention of his work. As to its method and plan—the intermingling of philosophical discussion with formal essays—little need be added to what is said on that point in the Introduction. It seems especially demanded by the subject of the work. A series of didactic essays, however

useful for dogmatic purposes, would ill accord with the freedom which necessarily pertains to philosophical inquiry. Another advantage not less marked is the formal recognition of divergent standpoints in the contemplation of truth, without which indeed Free-thought and free discussion are mere contradictions in terms, while a third reason of a different kind seems to be the expediency of investing philosophical subjects, whenever possible, with a humane, homely, and familiar interest. Writers on philosophy are too apt as a rule to affect the position of hierophants, they are careful watchers over sacred and incommunicable mysteries, they are teachers of esoteric lore, and in harmony with their high vocation their language is oftentimes pedantic and unduly technical. Now, whatever might have been urged in defence of such exclusiveness some centuries ago, it is certainly indefensible in these days of general culture. There are few problems that have emerged in the history of human speculation that might not profitably be discussed by well-informed and candid disputants, and few minds not hopelessly stunted by excessive dogma that might not benefit by such earnest and friendly colloquy. All such controversial exercitations must tend to engender intellectual independence, to awaken and stimulate thought, as well as to promote its truthful and ingenuous expression. This indeed represents one chief object of the work—its didactic as distinct from its historical aim. Writing the history of truth-seekers, the author incidentally advocates untiring and disinterested search for truth as the duty alike of the scientist, the philosopher, and the Christian. Hence he adopts—possibly from professional association—as the text of his subject the remarkable words of Locke found on the title-page, 'Believe it, my good friend, to love Truth for Truth's sake is the principal part of human perfection in this world, and the seed-plot of all other virtues.'

It may obviate misunderstanding with respect to other

writers who have within the last few years treated of subjects relating to the theme and personages herein discussed, if it is remembered that the work of which these volumes form a part was planned and begun seven or eight years ago. Both the execution and publication have been delayed by the author's distance from any large public library, and by other disadvantages and limitations of his position. For any defects attributable to such causes, though necessarily independent of his own volition, he offers his sincere apologies.

EAST ANSTEY RECTORY:
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EVENINGS WITH THE SKEPTICS.

INTRODUCTION.

INTRODUCTION.

THE warm rays of a July sun, loaded with the sounds and perfumes of summer, were pouring in through the open windows of the spacious library of Hilderton Hall in the county of Wilts; rebinding in aerial cloth of gold the goodly collection of vellum-bound folios which filled the lower tiers of shelves round the room; while they were reflected by the richly gilt backs of the more modern octavos which occupied the shelves above them. At the large writing table in the centre of the room, with grey head bent over a folio from which it was lifted only at certain intervals to make a note in the common-place book which lay open at his elbow, sat the master of the house to whom we are about to present our readers.

Alfred Trevor Esquire of Hilderton Hall, to give him his full designation, was a very remarkable man. For the greater part of his life he had been a consulting physician with a large London practice. But having reached what he considered the meridian of human existence—fifty years, he determined to retire from duties which increased fame rendered yearly more arduous, and live a secluded though not inactive life in some quiet rural neighbourhood. While meditating on this scheme, he received the welcome intelligence from a very old friend, a country parson, that the squire's place in his parish was for sale. He immediately took the requisite steps for securing what was to him a really 'desirable property,' and it was in this way that Mr. Trevor —the great London doctor, as the poor folks of the neighbourhood usually called him—came to be located at Hilderton. But although he had given up practice, he had not given up *theory*, as he used to say. He still took the keenest interest not only in all subjects relating to his old profession, but on all matters of general culture, especially philosophy, both

physical and metaphysical. Even in his busiest time Trevor had been a reading man. His medical friends were unable to understand how with such a practice he could find time for carefully perusing not only books connected with his profession, but the best products of the philosophical and scientific literature of France and Germany as well. He was indeed only able to effect this by the thrift of time which is the necessity of busy and the superfluity of idle men. Travelling by rail or in his carriage to a consultation, he was generally accompanied by some English or foreign work which had just been published, or, with pencil and note-book in hand, was engaged in writing memoranda for some medical or philosophical article which one of his editorial friends had induced him to undertake. One of the main reasons why he had thrown off the shackles of his profession so soon, was that he might have a greater amount of leisure for the pursuit of his studies. His life at Hilderton was pre-eminently that of a studious recluse. His books absorbed his whole time, with the exception of the needed intervals for food and exercise, which were however doled out with such a niggard hand, that an excess of half an hour in his ordinary exercise-time was, he affirmed, just as hurtful to him as an excess of food or drink. Some question of medicine or philosophy continually occupied his busy brain, nor was his pen unemployed in giving the results of his labours to a public which had always regarded them with an appreciative eye. Dr. Trevor had never been married. A philosopher, he maintained with Petrarca, did not need a wife, or if he did his philosophy was worthless. His housekeeper and sole female companion was an only sister, somewhat more advanced in years than himself, who superintended his household and cared for his wants with a thoughtfulness and assiduity almost maternal.

. . . . . .

While Dr. Trevor was employed in his library in the manner above described, a footstep was heard on the gravel walk outside, a slight tap at the window followed, and Mr. Arundel, the Rector of Hilderton, his very oldest friend, stepped into the room.

'Good morning, Doctor,' said he; 'hard at work as usual, I see. What study can you possibly find of sufficient interest to keep you indoors on such a glorious morning?'

'Good morning, my dear Arundel,' replied the doctor, rising hastily from his chair and shaking him warmly by the hand. 'I am engaged on a subject which has latterly taken up a good deal of my time—I am studying Empiricism.'

'Why,' retorted his friend with a grave satirical air, 'I thought you had retired from the profession.'

'From its practice only,' replied Dr. Trevor. 'In its theory, and in kindred speculations, I am more immersed than ever. Have you ever read Sextos Empeirikos?'

'The great empiric of Greek philosophy!' responded the Rector. 'No, not the man himself; I have in this instance followed the modern fashion of merely reading about him. I know what the common histories of philosophy say on the subject, and, to tell you the truth, I have not the least desire to push my researches beyond such second-hand authorities. To me it is always painful to contemplate the extreme weakness and imbecility of old age, especially in a dearly loved friend; and I have far too much regard for Greek philosophy, in its rapid growth and vigorous prime, to care to dwell upon the decrepitude of its declining years.'

'Nevertheless,' replied the doctor, 'old age is merely vigorous growth and blooming maturity mellowed into ripeness. It is the concentration of the wisdom and experience of a lifetime. My ideal of philosophy is not the young nor even the middle-aged man, with stalwart and vigorous frame, and head erect and well-poised upon his shoulders. It is rather the old man with snowy hair and bewrinkled brow, with stooping shoulders and feeble tottering gait. There you have not indeed the prime of material strength, but the calm mature wisdom of intellectual and spiritual power, founded upon the treasured experience and reflection of a lifetime. To reproach, as most historians love to do, the Greek philosophy with growing old, is just as reasonable as to blame a man of robust constitution for daring to attain the utmost possible limits of human existence.

'But,' rejoined Mr. Arundel, 'in your zeal for your

Skeptical friends you seem to me to mistake the purport of those writers' criticism. You know the proverb, "Once a man and twice a child." Zeller and his brother historians merely mean, as I take it, that Greek philosophy in the time of Pyrrhôn and Ainesidêmos was sinking into its second infancy. With all your enthusiasm for the Greek Skeptics, you surely would not contend that the philosophers of the Second Academy, including their Skeptic successors, are at all worthy of being placed by the side of Plato and Aristotle.'

'In my opinion,' answered the undaunted Trevor, 'the unworthiness is all the other way: I should award those "*maestri di color che sanno*," as Dante calls them, a place considerably below my favourites, Pyrrhôn, Karneades, and Sextos, who deserve confessedly the still higher title: "*I maestri di color che sanno la loro ignoranza.*" Your esteemed Plato was, for that matter, nothing more than an unfinished Skeptic. He lacked the hardihood and persistency to follow up his argument to its logical conclusion.'

'Yes,' said Mr. Arundel, 'for a very good reason: because he was clear-sighted enough to discern that to do so would involve him in a hopeless entanglement of puerilities and self-contradictions.'

'Why, as to that,' rejoined his friend, 'those who adopt a given line of argument, and who regard Logic as the guide or method of Reason, ought to carry it out bravely and consistently to its extreme conclusions. The motto for earnest thinkers should be, *Fiat Logica, ruat cœlum.*'

'Which,' retorted Mr. Arundel, 'is only another mode of affirming the ultimate impotence of all logical methods; for the outcome of unlimited dialectics is clearly negation. Your motto is synonymous with one which would appear truly terrible to a veteran rationalist like yourself: *Fiat Logica, ruat Ratio*; and your favourite Sextos is, if we may believe the reports current about him in histories of philosophy, a striking illustration of this irrational reasoning, and most illogical logic.'

'Read him for yourself, Arundel,' replied the doctor, 'and you will, if I mistake not, soon alter your opinion of him. He seems to me, with all his paradoxes, a wonderfully

keen and subtle thinker; moreover, he is the only one of all the numerous Skeptics, ancient and modern, who possessed sufficient learning and synthetical power to amalgamate the *membra disjecta* of Skeptical reasonings into a logical and coherent whole. Most historians allow him this merit. Cousin *e.g.* calls his works "*un système parfaitement lié dans toutes ses parties*,"[1] and this is certainly no more than the truth. His two works combined form an exhaustive treasury of Skeptical thinkers and Skeptical arguments. Placed as nearly as possible on the boundary line of Ancient and Modern Philosophy, he systematises the Skepticism of the former, while he may be called the nursing father of the free-thought of the latter. His influence during the centuries succeeding the Renaissance upon the leading thinkers of Europe was enormous, and has never been adequately appreciated. While as to the thought of the present day, there is hardly a single argument in the works of our modern Skeptics and experience philosophers which may not be found in germ or in some degree of development in his writings. 'I wonder that you, Arundel, when you were in pre-clerical days moving somewhat upon a Skeptical tack yourself, never came in actual contact with him.'

'To tell you the truth,' answered Mr. Arundel, 'I perceived the self-contradictory nature of the Pyrrhonism of which he is the great apostle too distinctly, to wish to become his disciple. Unlike yourself, Trevor, I don't much care for intellectual gymnastics in and for itself, without any definite aim or object. I don't care, *e.g.* to go a long day's shooting, climbing hills and wading streams for the mere sake of the exercise or the excitement of the chase. I want to make a bag of some kind: I don't mind it being what it mostly is, a small bag, but some amount of actual game I must take home, if I want to look back with pleasure to my day's work.'

'And thereby,' said Dr. Trevor, 'you evince your utter deficiency in a true sportsman's instinct, to whom his bag is or ought to be of subordinate consideration. Remember Horace's "venator."

[1] *Hist. Gén. de la Philosophie*, p. 187.

Leporem venator ut alta
In nive sectetur, positum sic tangere nolit.

'I have never been much of a sportsman myself, but I should suppose, in harmony with the opinion I have frequently heard from enthusiasts in field-sports, that its greatest charm consists in the healthy exercise, the free-play of the limbs, the exhilaration of mind, the variety of scenery and the general excitement of the sport, rather than in the bag, as it is called. I, at all events, am quite content to pursue my intellectual researches—to join in the pursuit of truth—without any selfish regard to the contents of my possible bag of results. Thereby I enjoy my day's exercise, the free-play of my reasoning faculties, the picturesque diversity of views and arguments (spiritual scenery, so to speak) of the greatest thinkers of all time, without a greedy calculation of what I am likely to gain by my efforts; indeed, without the faintest wish to incommode myself with a burden which I might perchance lack strength to carry home. Besides,' added he, somewhat mournfully, 'is it not the usual fate of philosophers in search of positive truth to return empty-handed—"to go out for wool and come back shorn," as the old proverb has it. You, for instance, with all your eagerness to make a bag, must have often wended your way homewards after a long and hard day's work with nothing at all to show for it, and a similar fate must have often befallen you in your intellectual researches: so far as positive truth is concerned, you have returned bag-less. Sometimes, too, you must have fired at what appeared in the fog to be a desirable quarry, but which a nearer approach discovers to be perhaps some useless inanimate object. What have you then for your bag?'

'The result, to be sure,' replied Arundel; 'I include negative as well as positive results in my definition of intellectual game—the detection of error as well as the discovery of truth. Perhaps the false appearance by which I was misled may have deceived hundreds of brother sportsmen before me. By discovering and exposing such a falsehood, I shall have effected a positive service to the cause of truth:

I shall have hunted down an *idôlum*, as your friend Bacon would term it.*

'For that matter,' rejoined Dr. Trevor, 'I can match your hunting there: I can make a bag of *idôla*—detected errors, or negative truths. Why, here (putting his hand on the folio lying open on the table) you have the largest bag of that sort of game that was ever put together, but, like Sextos, I am unable to bag anything better.'

'Well, take my advice, Doctor,' answered his friend, 'don't be too scrupulous in your hunting and in your estimate of game. If you can't find a blackcock or a pheasant, be content with a rabbit. Truthseekers, like some sportsmen I have known, lose a great number of useful ordinary certainties from excessive fastidiousness. Some years ago I had a day's deer-stalking in Scotland, and returned with a single moor-hen; but even so I had something for my labour, whereas, had I disdained moor-fowl until I had bagged the nobler quarry of which I was in search, I should have come home quite empty-handed. But I must stay no longer at present, discussing a subject so alien to my profession as Skepticism. I am on my way to the top of West-hill down to see that poor fellow Thompson, who broke his leg the other day. I called with Fanny's compliments to ask yourself and Miss Trevor to dinner the day after to-morrow. We expect the Harringtons of whom you have so often heard us speak. By the way, if you want a hearer for your Skeptical opinions you cannot have a better man than Harrington, who unites with a lawyer's acumen, and the deliberative qualities of a judge, a genuine love of culture and philosophy, especially if the latter is tinged with Skepticism after the manner of Mill, of whom he is an enthusiastic admirer.'

'Thanks; I shall be delighted to come, and so I am sure will Louisa,' answered Dr. Trevor; 'I have, as you know, long been wanting to make the acquaintance of your friend Harrington as a kindred sportsman in the broad plains of philosophy. We may compare bags, you know,' added the doctor with a smile.

'Very true,' replied Mr. Arundel, as he turned and stepped out of the open window on to the gravel walk outside; 'but I

don't think that with all his taste for Skepticism you will find Harrington glorying in the emptiness of his bag, or thinking that the sole purpose of the chase is the healthy exercise thereby acquired.'

'Well, we shall see,' rejoined the doctor, as he resumed his seat, and once more bent his head over his folio, while his friend proceeded on his way.

. . . . . .

On the day and time appointed, Dr. Trevor and his sister took their way to the rectory, and found on their arrival that the Harringtons had preceded them. Mr. Arundel facetiously introduced his friend Harrington to Dr. Trevor as 'a modern to an ancient Skeptic.' As in duty bound, we must perform the same office of presenting the learned lawyer to our readers.

Charles Harrington Esquire Q.C. was a well-known member of the English bar, and a leader of the . . . . Circuit. For the greater part of his life he had resided in London, but latterly had been compelled, owing to his wife's delicate health, to take up his abode on the breezy Wiltshire downs, not far from Salisbury. He had known Arundel since university days, the two men having cemented a mutual friendship of the most intimate kind while students and subsequently fellows of Balliol College, Oxford. Though continually immersed in legal business, Harrington's pronounced literary tastes could not forego the relaxation of what he used to call ironically 'light literature;' the aforesaid light literature consisting generally of philosophical and scientific works, foreign as well as English, which most people would have pronounced exceedingly heavy. He had only recently planted himself within four or five miles of Hilderton, and though he had always maintained a friendly correspondence with Arundel, this happened to be the first occasion on which the Rector of Hilderton was able to introduce him to his still older friend, Trevor. Of the personal appearance of these three men, it is needless to say anything. It will suffice to remark that so far as intellect, manliness, and refinement could be expressed by physiognomy, they were as striking examples of thoughtfulness and culture as could easily be found in the

ranks of the learned professions to which they severally belonged.

. . . . . .

When dinner was over, and the ladies had retired (Mrs. Arundel being engaged in taking her new friend Mrs. Harrington over the rectory grounds), the gentlemen drew their chairs round to the open window, and the claret-jug being placed at a convenient distance, Mr. Arundel opened the conversation as follows:—

'Trevor and I were talking the other day, Harrington, of a subject in which you have always been much interested—Philosophical Skepticism. He claims to be, as I have told you, a Skeptic of the first water; or, taking the element in a more appropriate form, I should rather say—the first degree of cloudiness and mist. Sextos Empeirikos is his master. His works are his Philosophical Bible: of which I may say, in words now nearly forgotten, that he

> Devoutly reads therein by day,
> And meditates by night.

As a result of these eccentric studies, he is an extreme philosophical Nonconformist. His intellectual and religious creed is Dissidence. A dogma, especially if long established and surrounded by some amount of prestige and authority, immediately excites his ire and distrust. Indeed, dissent has become to him so much easier than assent, that if caught off his guard without time for mature consideration, I think he would very likely dispute the fact of his own existence. His Science is Nescience, and his most absolute certainty is that all things are uncertain. His unbelief even exceeds that of the man who woke every morning with the conviction that everything was an open question; for what may have been in his case a temporary aberration of a half-wakened consciousness, is Trevor's normal condition. . . . Only, with the happy inconsistency of most Skeptics, he confines his unbelief to speculation, for in action and the practical concerns of life, he is as prompt and decisive as any man I know.'

TREVOR (smiling). Thanks, Arundel, for my portrait, which I hope, however, Harrington will consider is rather a carica-

ture than a true likeness. Leaving out your antithetical rhetoric, and using simple terms, I plead guilty to the accusation of Skepticism. I am, I suppose, a Skeptic—*i.e.* in philosophy and speculation; or, if the paradox were allowable, I should rather say, I believe in Skepticism. For that unfortunate *instinct* (it is really nothing else, as I have proved by numerous comparisons between the spontaneous action of my mind in the presence of any authoritative dictum or dogma, and the reflex action which we term instinct in certain animals), I hold Nature to be primarily responsible. Descended, as Arundel knows, from an extremely heterodox father of my own profession, whose belief was almost bounded by the scalpel and microscope, Skepticism is in my case an hereditary complaint. Perhaps in some future, near or remote, the advance of physiology may reveal the abnormal constitution of grey matter, which manifests itself as the psychical phenomenon we call Skepticism. Anyhow, I was evidently born with a restless, inquiring, dissatisfied, mystery-hating kind of disposition; for my nurse used to say that if any toys were given me having hidden springs, or happened to be representations of moving or sound-uttering animals, or anything I suppose that commended itself to my young senses as a contradiction of the great order of Nature, I invariably used to smash the article before it had been an hour in my possession, in order to get at the source of the wonder. Thus early did I indicate a tendency to 'destructive analysis' which has been my characteristic, or, as Arundel would say, my foible, through life.

HARRINGTON. Well, if the irresistible impulse to break toys forebodes a future of disbelief, I have a young urchin now in my nursery who is clearly destined to achieve great eminence as a Skeptic, at some future day.

TREVOR. You had better have an eye to him and his training, if you intend him to remain through life within the bounds of orthodox and conventional beliefs: of course such infantile tendencies must not be pushed too far. In my own case, I can still recall the suspicion with which I received any communication of a portentous or extraordinary kind, and the grave rumination over pros and cons by which I tried

to get at its probable truth or falsehood. Fairy tales and mythological stories I cordially detested. It seemed a sufficient hardship to have to decide on narratives which purported to be true; but to require even a momentary consideration for stories which professed to be false was an injury against which my budding intellect vehemently recalcitrated. In arriving at my conclusions, it generally sufficed that the matter for which my acquiescence was claimed was opposed to my tiny experience, and the assertion that 'I had never seen it,' or that 'such things never happened now-a-days,' was, I thought, a sufficient warrant for a complete *epoché* or suspension of belief. I remember once being flogged by an irascible master for sturdily asserting that his teaching as to the earth moving round the sun was false, and that I wouldn't believe him; for, as I said, I had seen the sun move round the earth, or as much of it as I could see, hundreds of times. It was not until a few obvious experiments had shown the possibility of mistaking apparent for real motion, that I sullenly yielded a grudging acquiescence to the doctrine. I waged a similar war against the more startling of the Bible narratives, which a pious old aunt used to try and impress on me, though, as a rule, my Skepticism was here overawed and subdued by religious reverence: so that I feared to meet these wonders with the direct expression of unbelief which I did not scruple to apply to ordinary marvels. Still, I was never tired of applying the present as an infallible test of the past, and interpreting the whole course of the world by my own brief experience. Hence my reiterated inquiries, on hearing or reading of some miraculous events, 'Why does not God do so now?' and my childish attempts to reconcile my aunt's exhortations to unquestioning faith with my own insatiable curiosity were, I am bound to say, far from successful. Thus I grew up, and have passed through life opposing an instinctive and uncontrollable resistance to dogmatic affirmation on the one hand, and dogmatic negation on the other, and have succeeded I think in attaining to a certain amount of that *ataraxia*, or philosophic calm, which I conceive to be the final goal not only of Skepticism, but of the exercise of every intellectual energy.

HARRINGTON. Luckily for nurses and teachers, it is not often that children manifest such a determined—I will not say perverse—incredulity as you seem to have done. Your childhood betrays, however, a most unusual defect of the idealising faculty. With most children—it was the case, *e.g.* with myself—that dreamy period when the new-born imagination revels in a world of its own, peopled not with prosaic men and women, but with giants and fairies and pixies and gnomes, is full of intense delight, and the gradual awaking to the stern, cold, and dull realities of life is not unattended with a bitter sense of disappointment. Most thinking men would, I suspect, re-echo Wordsworth's experience:

> Heaven lies about us in our infancy,
> Shades of the prison-house begin to close
> Upon the growing boy.

For my part, I cannot think the child is to be envied who knows nothing of this ideal paradise and who is born surrounded with the dark shadows of the prison-house. My development was so far different from yours, that it was not until I went to Oxford that I experienced a desire to analyse the stock of ready-made beliefs I had been accumulating during the preceding portion of my life. The study which awoke me from the 'dogmatic slumber,' to use Kant's words, in which I had placidly and pleasantly spent some twenty years, was the diligent perusal of Plato, to whose dialogues I was first attracted by the imagination of the disciple, though I soon felt the influence of the master's resistless logic, the quickening effects of his 'torpedo-shock.'

TREVOR. I see: dialectics insidiously conveyed in the garb of idealism, like a powder hidden in jam. Precisely the treatment which an imaginative and, I have little doubt, poetic youth like yourself required. I can easily realise the rude shock which a thoughtful study and consistent application of the Sokratic *Elenchus* would have on a reflective and independent mind. By the way, it is a fact worth notice, that almost every one of the great thinkers of the world were wakened by some skeptical influence. So if Skepticism did no more than startle original minds, the function which

Sokrates claimed for it, and impel them in the path of inquiry, it would still deserve the thanks of reasoning humanity.

ARUNDEL. I knew, if I once set you two going on the congenial subject of Skepticism, you would not know when to stop. But I want to ask you, Harrington, whether you too have discovered, as Trevor claims to have done, that Skepticism is in itself a satisfactory conclusion to have arrived at—nay, the only possible goal of all human intellectual effort; and have you arrived by its means at the heaven of *ataraxia*, or philosophical calm?

HARRINGTON. No, I cannot say that I have: Skepticism is to me only the best method for the discovery of truth. My philosophical motto would be, 'Disbelieve, that you may believe.' For my part, I should regard doubt, considered as the final aim or inevitable goal of all mental effort, as opening up an exceedingly dreary prospect for humanity. My object and desired haven is solely truth, though I am content to pursue it in the cautious mode which becomes a modern philosopher. Hence, even when I think I possess it, I regard such possession as in most cases provisionary, and always await, what I find there is always need of—further light.

TREVOR. Notwithstanding your disclaimer, there seems to me no great difference in our respective positions. For myself, I am content with Skepticism rather than truth for my object, from a sincere conviction of my inability to attain, and unworthiness to possess the latter. Paraphrasing the well-known words of Lessing, I would say truth is too mighty for me. It is the prerogative solely of omniscience.[1]

[1] Lessing's remarkable words which Dr. Trevor here paraphrases are:—'Were God in his right hand to hold enclosed all Truth, and in his left only the ever-energising impulse towards Truth, with the addition of a perpetual possibility of error, and were to say to me, Choose! Humbly would I bow before his left hand, and say, "Father, give; pure truth is for Thee alone!"' *Lessing, Werke*, ed. Lachmann, x. p. 120. But the distinction between Opinion and Truth, and the fitness of the latter for the gods only, is frequently asserted in early Greek philosophy. In the fragments of Parmenides, opinion is represented as necessarily false and opposed to truth. Diogenes Laertius quotes a fragment of Alcmæon of Crotonia: 'Of things divine (*ἀφανέων*) and of things human (*θνητῶν*), the gods have

Hence I content myself with—nay, I deliberately prefer as more suitable to human weakness, continual research.

ARUNDEL. It may be some defect of mental organisation, but I have never been able to appreciate that position of Lessing's. It seems to me to be in philosophy the same sort of spurious humility which we have in some eminent religionists, and which does not exclude a considerable amount of pride and self-importance. Nor is the assertion that truth is the prerogative of omniscience quite decisive of our human incompetence to attain it, or at least some considerable share of it. Omniscience is not needed, I humbly conceive, in order to convince me of such elementary truths as the fact of my existence. Indeed, I doubt whether its possession could add anything to the strength of my present conviction on the point. Goethe, you know, said that you need not go round the world in order to maintain that the sky is blue.

TREVOR. You want a course of reading, my dear friend, in some of the freer spirits of Greek philosophy. Let me recommend you to renew your acquaintance with Plato's Dialogues of Search, and to follow them up by Sextos Empeirikos. . . . Years ago, you remember, you were much more amenable both to the truth and numberless advantages of a Skeptic's position.

ARUNDEL. No doubt: I have also had my 'Wandeljahre' of doubt and restlessness, as no one knows better than yourself; but I could no more have acquiesced permanently in such a state, than I could go to sleep with my limbs stretched on a rack. . . . Hence my 'pilgrim's progress' has been very different from both of yours; and so also

perfect knowledge, men only guess.' Cf. Karsten, *Parmenides*, p. 141, note. So Varro, quoted by Augustine, 'Quid putem, non quid contendam pouam, hominis enim est, hæc opinari, Dei scire,' Aug. *De Civ. Dei*, vii. 17. Comp. *Diog. Laert.* ed. Meibomius, viii. 83, page 542 note. So Lactantius, *De Fals. Sap.* chap. iii. says, 'In seipso habere propriam scientiam non hominis, sed Dei est.' Montaigne as well as Lessing prefers the process to the object of intellectual research. 'Je propose,' says he, 'des fantasies informes et irrésolues, comme font ceulx qui publient des questions doubteuses à desbattre aux escholles, non, pour établir la vérité, mais pour la chercher.' *Essais* i. ch. lvi., and a similar preference has often been avowed by other Skeptics.

has its natural termination; for when bewildered by conflicting systems of thought and speculation, I ultimately found my haven in a moderate and rational Christian Theology.

HARRINGTON. Each man, so far as he is a reasoning being, must find his intellectual anchorage in the harbour, not for which he sails, but towards which he drifts, as it seems to me, guided by the winds and tides of constitution, temperament, education, external circumstances, and the like. It would be a disastrous fate for the intellectual and spiritual commerce of mankind, if all the shipping had to start from the same port and could find shelter only in the same harbour.

TREVOR. To that proposition—although its implication would shock many strict people—I heartily assent. But while you were speaking a sudden thought struck me: By a strange and fortuitous concurrence of circumstances, we have here assembled in this lonely Wiltshire valley, almost shut out from the rest of the world, representatives of the three great divisions of Greek philosophers.[1] I am the skeptic or mere seeker; Harrington the academic or searcher, who hopes to find truth, at least, approximately; and Arundel the dogmatic, who claims to have found truth. Now why should not we form ourselves into a committee for the purpose of examining the tenets or, if you like, the non-tenets of my friends the Skeptics? I had occasion the other day to refer to an enterprise of a similar kind. I mean Vaughan's useful and lively work: 'Hours with the Mystics.' In my humble opinion the Skeptics are infinitely more interesting people than the Mystics, they are of much greater importance in the history of human thought; add to which that Skepticism is much more prevalent now-a-days than Mysticism. And yet there is no history of Skepticism in any modern language at all worthy of its subject. Now, why

[1] *Ἴσως καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν κατὰ φιλοσοφίαν ζητουμένων οἱ μὲν εὑρηκέναι τὸ ἀληθὲς ἔφασαν, οἱ δὲ ἀπεφήναντο μὴ δυνατὸν εἶναι τοῦτο καταληφθῆναι οἱ δὲ ἔτι ζητοῦσιν . . . . . ζητοῦσι δὲ οἱ σκεπτικοί.* Sext. Emp. *Pyrrh. Hyp.* i. 1. Diogenes Lærtius divides philosophers into two classes, Dogmatics and Skeptics. *Vitæ Philosophorum Proœm.*

should not we three take the place of Vaughan's interlocutors and have our 'Hours,' or better perhaps our 'Evenings with the Skeptics'?

HARRINGTON. You have omitted another advantage of applying Vaughan's method to the Skeptics, *i.e.* their treatment by converse and discussion is infinitely better suited to Skeptics than to Mystics. The appropriate environment of a literary subject should be considered of as much importance as the setting of a precious stone, and I have always regarded Vaughan's book as a stone ill set. As a matter of Æsthetics we have no right to surround mysticism with a restless halo, like a quivering Aurora of questions and answers, problems and solutions. Its surroundings should be an atmosphere of unquestioning, serene, semi-somnolent acquiescence. On the other hand, discussion and debate form the very life-breath and life-blood of Skepticism.

ARUNDEL. I have no objection to take part in your enterprise, only I must stipulate for the more moderate names as my share of the undertaking. I fear I should never have patience to wade through the quibbles and self-contradictions of such a thinker as Sextos Empeirikos, for instance.

HARRINGTON. If I can possibly find time, I shall be delighted to join in such an undertaking, and am ready to do my utmost to contribute to its success. Philosophical study has been for years my chief relaxation from professional drudgery, and I shall be glad to give the definite aim to my somewhat desultory reading which such an opportunity will afford.

ARUNDEL. I have agreed to join you, and don't want to throw cold water on our new-born scheme, but I confess to some fear that we may not be able to impart to our subject sufficient diversity so as to render it picturesque and attractive to the average thinker. Now you may have, and in histories of Philosophy you do have, infinite varieties of Dogmas or systems of belief, but there can be only one kind of Skepticism. You may construct with a great variety of materials, in many styles of architecture, and for almost numberless purposes, but there is only one method of

destruction that I ever heard of. And my first feeling on hearing your proposal was that a survey of a number of Skeptics would be about as interesting as a walk through a picture gallery which consisted of repetitions of one single portrait. Though the subject of it were drawn with every conceivable variety of expression, attitude, dress &c., and with every possible difference of style and material, of accessories and surroundings, no art or device could, as I think, make such a gallery really interesting.

TREVOR. But the same objection might have been made to Vaughan's work, before he had so triumphantly proved that it was groundless. No doubt there is a considerable family likeness in his gallery of mystics, yet the strong individuality common to them with all original thinkers, their different ways of arriving at their conclusions, their manifold modes of setting forth and developing their opinions, and their varied methods of applying them, constitute a never-ending succession of diverse systems and constructions. Moreover, I cannot at all agree with you as to the substantial identity and consequent monotony of all kinds of destructive criticism, on which point your illustration seems to me misleading. There are in my opinion just as many diversities of disbelief or unbelief as there are of mysticism or any other form of constructive thought. Indeed, so great are the flexibility and versatility of the human mind, that even when it appears to be following a single path, it is continually attempting new directions, sometimes more pleasant and striking, sometimes, perhaps, as mere short-cuts; so that the variety in the apparent uniformity is in reality continuous and unceasing. In this respect the human mind is like Nature herself: careful of the type, it is prodigal of individual differences; or, to use a musical illustration, like Paganini's fiddle, when in the master's hand it is capable of playing an endless diversity of airs and variations on a single string.

HARRINGTON. I thoroughly agree with you, Doctor, as to the inexhaustible variety of human beliefs and speculations, even when the general tendency is the same. For my part, I should be much surprised if in the case of a system of belief being dethroned in the minds of many men at the

same time, the methods of attack and destruction were in any two precisely alike. Some men, *e.g.* must take an antagonistic system by storm; others, by sapping and mining; others again, by quietly beleaguering it and starving out the garrison. The last is, I think, the most effective method, at least I have always found it so in my own case; . . . but there is one difficulty which suggests itself *in limine* to our project, *i.e.* our distance from a good library. There is nothing of the kind in Salisbury, and I am well aware of the scarcity of the works of mediæval free-thinkers.

TREVOR. Oh, as to that, you need not trouble yourself. I happen to have a goodly collection of the works of all the great free-thinkers, in most of the modern languages, as well as translations of Oriental literature of the same kind; so that we shall be independent of public libraries.

ARUNDEL. If you, Harrington, could only cast a glance over his bookshelves your fears on that score would soon be dissipated. Trevor's library contains, I am bound to say, more heresy than the Bodleian and British Museum put together. I am quite afraid to put my hand upon a book I don't happen to know for fear of some subtle heretical contamination. I don't suppose you know, Trevor, that I always think it my duty when I have left your library, supposing I am alone, to kick the dust off my feet directly I get round the corner.

TREVOR. Pooh! pooh! Arundel. I know you are not one of those clerics who never look into any but so-called orthodox books; who learn the contents of others by divination, criticise them by intuition, and pronounce judgment on them by inspiration. To a narrow-minded or uncritical book you have as great an aversion as myself. After all, if there must be heretics in the world, I don't know that you can have them in a quieter, more unobtrusive form, than bound in calf or vellum, and placidly reposing upon a library shelf. There they stand with their ideas clearly or obscurely expressed, as the case may be, no doubt the very best they were capable or had the means of forming; yet asking no recognition at our hands, demanding no intercourse, claiming no identity of thought, expressing no displeasure if we contradict them; being in fact perfectly indifferent, not only to our opinion, but

to our existence. But at the same time, if we really want to learn what they say, they offer their views and arguments with as much cogency and learning as they were gifted with; thus saying their say and leaving the issue to us.

ARUNDEL. For controversial purposes the passive qualities you enumerate are hardly an advantage. Books, at least of dead authors, have an aggravating habit of re-affirmation. 'What they say they stick to' with, if I may *quote* an unclerical expletive, 'damnable iteration.' Hence nothing is so dogmatic as printers' type; nothing less amenable to reasoning, ridicule, or any antagonistic influence which can be brought against it. '*Litera scripta manet*' is usually supposed a merit, but the merit of fixity is not one of which Skeptics and free-thinkers are generally enamoured. . . . But, if you will excuse me, it is quite time we broke up our conference and joined the ladies. As Harrington has asked us to his house the week after next, we shall soon have another opportunity of discussing Trevor's proposal more at length and settling the plan to be adopted. I vote, however, that we have ladies at our sittings; our wives, together with Miss Trevor, should be considered *ex-officio* members of our Skeptical conclave. I have a somewhat selfish reason for making this suggestion, because I feel that in the interests of dogmatism, or definite belief, I am a little overweighted by you two.

HARRINGTON. By all means if the ladies care to join, which I am not sure that Mrs. Harrington always would. But we shall be shortly having a sister of my wife's staying with us permanently, and she, I know, would be delighted to join us, not only as an appreciative listener, but also, if need were, as an intelligent and active participator in our labours. For the greater part of her life she has resided in Germany, and has thereby acquired an avidity for all kinds of philosophical and literary disquisitions. I fear, though, Arundel will not always be able to reckon on her vote in the interests of Dogmatism.

TREVOR. I presume I must submit to the arrangement, though I do it somewhat under protest. There is, I cannot help thinking, an inherent incompatibility between the intellectual organisation of *the sex*, stunted as it has been by

centuries of ill education and imperfect development, and the absolute freedom from bias which is a primary requisite for Skeptical inquiry. Perhaps, however, the German young lady will form an exception to the rule. When we meet at Harrington's I will bring with me, if you like, a paper on the Causes of Skepticism which we can then read and discuss; it will serve to set our philosophical bark fairly afloat.

HARRINGTON (as the friends rose from their seats and took their way to the Drawing-Room). A capital idea, Doctor! Pray do so by all means.

. . . . . .

EVENING I.

GENERAL CAUSES OF SKEPTICISM.

Hæc (inquisitio) quippe prima sapientiæ clavis definitur: assidua scilicet seu frequens interrogatio; . . . Dubitando enim ad inquisitionem venimus, inquirendo veritatem percipimus.

ABÉLARD, *Sic et Non*, p. 16 : Ed. Cousin.

'Le Scepticisme est donc le premier pas vers la vérité.'

DIDEROT, *Pensées Philosophiques.*

ὁ ταχὺ ἐμπιστεύων κοῦφος καρδίᾳ, καὶ ὁ ἁμαρτάνων εἰς ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ, πλημμελήσει.

Ecclesiasticus, xix. 4.

EVENING I.

GENERAL CAUSES OF SKEPTICISM.

On the day appointed during the last week in July, the three friends again met at Harrington's house, which was beautifully situated on a plateau sheltered by fir plantations, half-way up a declivity known as Marley-comb Down, and at a point midway between Hilderton and Salisbury. The Rector of Hilderton had driven over Dr. Trevor and his sister—Mrs. Arundel not being able to accompany her husband, owing to the illness of one of her children. It was a lovely summer afternoon, the heat of the sun being tempered by the breezes which blew off the downs, as well as by detachments of light fleecy summer-clouds, the shadows of which followed each other in slow marching order up and down their grassy sides. A forward spring and hot summer had produced an early and abundant harvest, which was already in full operation. Dr. Trevor was never tired of expatiating on the characteristic beauties of the country through which they were passing. 'After all,' said he, 'harvest is the time for Wiltshire. The corn fields, with their rich glow of colour and picturesque groups of harvesters, give precisely that rélief to ear and eye which our unwooded and generally silent downs seem to need.'

'Very true,' answered Arundel; 'harvest is our best time, though a long residence in South Wiltshire has convinced me, that it is not without its beauties at every season.'

Trevor. Nevertheless, friend Arundel, it holds good of scenery, as of most other objects of human observation: we endue it to a great extent with beauties which our imagination brings to its contemplation.

'Reserve your Skepticism,' laughingly rejoined his friend, 'till after dinner.'

. . . . . .

During dinner the conversation naturally turned on Dr. Trevor's proposed Skeptical discussions, and Mr. Arundel's suggestion that the ladies should, as he put it, 'adorn the debates by their presence, even if they did not aid them by their wisdom.' The suggestion was warmly approved by the ladies themselves, especially by Miss Leycester, Mrs. Harrington's sister, who had arrived from Germany the week before. This young lady entered into the scheme *con amore*; and as a proof of its feasibility, and the propriety of its comprehending ladies, she entertained the company with her experiences in Germany, where after-dinner conversations on Science and Philosophy were as common in educated circles, as they are rare in England.

'You see, Florence,' said her brother-in-law, 'there is in this difference of national tastes an obvious system of compensation and proportion. The German, after his simple dinner and light wines, is braced up for a discussion on ponderous subjects. The Englishman, after his substantial meal and heavy wines, is naturally unable to do more than aid the circulation of that vapid compound of scandal and inanity which constitutes the staple of English table-talk. Who was it said, "Tell me a man's cookery, and I will tell you his philosophy"?'

TREVOR. More than one caustic observer of our species. The close mutual relations of head and stomach have always been a favourite subject for sarcasm among cynics and humourists.

MISS LEYCESTER. Whoever he was, he omitted some rather important elements which seem to aid in the determination of a man's philosophical creed. Besides his food, he should have taken into account the man's race, parentage, and constitution, his physical surroundings, climate, scenery, and, I almost think, geological formation as well. I have always had an idea that a history of Philosophy might be written on a sort of geographical or meteorological standard. Skeptics and free-thinkers, *e.g.* are, so I have

been told, natives of countries in which the atmosphere is clear, the sky unclouded, and where distant objects are distinctly defined. Worshippers of Dogma, on the other hand, thrive best in misty cloud-covered countries, in which the horizon of each man does not extend beyond a short distance of his personal presence. This, if true, would account for the 'dim religious light' which extreme dogmatists of every creed consider as the appropriate environment of their worship.

ARUNDEL. Of course a Skeptic is a hater of horizons: that a limit should exist, though only apparently, and at the farthest bound of his visual powers, is a thought not to be borne.

MISS LEYCESTER. Perhaps, Mr. Arundel, it is true of limitations of mental as well as of physical vision, that they are only apparent—at least to people who have the hardihood to climb the mountains which bound the view, or to penetrate to the point where the earth seems to touch the sky.

HARRINGTON. In some cases you may be right, Florence, certainly not in all. The very *raison d'être* of the Skeptic consists in the fact that there are very distinct limits to his mental vision, as well as to his other faculties for exploration. The mountains are really impassable, and the distant horizon much too far to be reached by his feeble powers of locomotion; . . . but I confess I have a dislike to discussing a difficult matter informally and 'out of court;' so, as we appear to have finished dinner, I propose that we adjourn to the study and hear Dr. Trevor's argument on the General Causes of Skepticism.

. . . . . .

When they had taken their places in the study, Dr. Trevor introduced the subject as follows:—

'In this as in all other subjects of science, we must in due form begin with definition. Now, what is Skepticism?'

To this question there was for a moment or two no answer: then Miss Trevor replied:—

'Skepticism is infidelity, of course.'

TREVOR. A natural answer, Louisa, but not quite con-

clusive. You have merely given the term which Christian Theology has adopted, not quite correctly, as the synonym of the Greek word. In fact, nothing could better elucidate the difference between the classical and Christian conception of this tendency of the human intellect, than a comparison of the two words with their collateral implications. What to the old Greek was merely free search or inquiry coupled with abstention from assertion, became to Christians a blameworthy deficiency of or even antagonism to true Belief.

ARUNDEL. The definition of Skepticism by means of positive terms is difficult. Philosophers are generally classed according to their tenets; but inasmuch as Skeptics deny the tenability of all tenets, it is obvious that some other method must be employed with regard to them. It is not easy to say what should be the positive characteristics of those who deliberately maintain they possess none, except negation and nothingness. Skeptics are in fact the cyphers and blanks of Philosophy.

TREVOR (smiling). True, Arundel. Cyphers because they add tenfold to the value of all other philosophical systems; and blanks, because their worth is indeterminate and unbounded.

HARRINGTON. Suppose we proceed by derivation: the word *Skepto*, first used of bodily eye-sight, and hence of prying, searching, &c., was afterwards applied to its psychical counterpart of mental inquiry and research. Its signification of doubt arises in an easily explicable manner from its second stage.

MISS LEYCESTER. Sight, Research, Reflection, Doubt —the main stages in the history of the word—seem typical of corresponding stages in the mental growth of the individual and in the history of philosophy.

TREVOR (warmly). I quite agree with you, Miss Leycester, and am glad to think that I have secured so important an auxiliary to my view of the question. . . . As to the meaning of the Greek word, we find that the Greek Skeptics employed a number of terms to signify what I may provisionally call the suspensive attitude of the human mind. I have drawn out lists—(1) of the terms employed to define

the method; (2) of maxims, axioms, and proverbs which they used as elementary principles of Skeptical science. Of the first I find no less than eighteen different terms; while of the second I have accumulated upwards of twelve:[1]—facts which sufficiently prove how thoroughly Greek philosophical thought was permeated by Skepticism. Leaving then the Greek technical terms for doubt, and turning to the word Skepticism as we mean to use it in our investigations, we must bear in mind that the word now covers in common acceptation a large space of ground. It may be taken as including every conceivable kind and degree of Un-faith; from pure disinterested inquiry to the most determined and self-contradictory suspense, on the one side; and from the faintest suspicion of the untrustworthiness of the senses to the extremest and most self-annihilating negation, on the other side. Our first task must therefore be to narrow our scope, for it is clear that if we were to include in our survey every skeptical inquirer, commonly so called, our undertaking would be an endless one.

HARRINGTON. There is moreover a further consideration. 'Skeptical' denotes a particular mental attitude which may be evinced in relation to any subject-matter of investigation; hence the term, as De Quincey remarked,[2] cannot be used absolutely. A man, *e.g.* may be a Skeptic in History or Science as well as in Theology. Are we to divide Skeptics according to the subjects of their doubt, or are we to limit our inquiry to those usually so denominated, *i.e.* Religious Skeptics?

ARUNDEL. Such a division would, in my opinion, be untechnical and embarrassing; for, *pace* the authority of De Quincey and customary usage, nothing, as it appears to me, can be more thoroughgoing in its tendencies and operations

[1] For these lists, see Appendix A.

[2] Compare *Life and Writings*, by Page, vol. ii. pp. 60, 61. 'Sceptical, it strikes me, cannot be used *absolutely*, but only in relation to some *assigned* object known and indicated. . . .' 'It is true,' he adds, 'that the word *is* used absolutely in one colloquial case, viz., when we say, "Kant was a Sceptic; Hume was a Sceptic," but even then it is an *elliptic* expression . . . for we all understand Sceptic or doubter in the doctrines of Christianity.'

than genuine Skepticism. Tennyson's verse has in this respect a larger application than its author perhaps intended:—

'Unfaith in aught, is want of faith in all.'[1]

We must, I think, divide Skeptics, not according to the objects of their unbelief, but according to the motive-influences by which they seem to be determined.

TREVOR. I agree with you that the division by subjects would be mechanical and illogical, but not as to the equal liability to unbelief of all subjects of human knowledge; for as a rule incredulity originates and thrives in direct ratio as the supposed knowledge to which it is related transcends our personal experience. . . . I have here drawn up a list of Skepticisms, if I may be allowed the word, by which we can guide ourselves in our investigations. Some of them we must reject because the essential attribute of Skepticism is wanting to them.

1. The first we may term the Skepticism of ignorance. This is the kind spoken of by Diderot in his Pensées:—'Celui qui doute parce qu'il ne connait pas les raisons de crédibilité n'est qu'un ignorant.'[2] It is this sort of Skepticism which forms the basis of much of the crude and noisy vapouring on the subject current among the lower orders in our large towns, and which is destined to entire extinction or large modification before the advance of education. With Skepticism such as this, uninformed and unenlightened, our enquiry can have nothing to do.

2. Closely akin, yet governed by another cause, is the Skepticism of cynicism. This is the Incredulity of men who, though not unacquainted with the methods and results of scientific reasearch, are from mere intellectual indolence, or, more rarely, from unaffected contempt, utterly indifferent to the existence or reality of Truth and Knowledge. Diderot terms this 'l'indolence du Sceptique.'

3. The Skepticism of pure inquiry: in other words, the

[1] Compare Cousin, *Etudes sur Pascal*, p. 47. 'En effet, comme l'a dit M. Royer-Collard: "*On ne fait point au scepticisme sa part*," il est absolu ou il n'est pas; il triomphe entièrement ou il périt tout entier.' But see below, chapter on 'Twofold Truth,' vol. ii. Evening I.

[2] *Pensées philosophiques*, *Œuv. comp.*, Ed. Garnier, i. p. 137.

provisional acceptance of certain Truths as such, while searching and waiting for further enlightenment. This, as has often been remarked, is the necessary attitude of Science—indeed progressive Science is inconceivable without it. Most of the so-called Skepticism which distinguishes the leading Scientists of our day is of this kind—a cautious reception of such scientific facts and hypotheses as seem to have most warrant for them, rather than a conscious and decisive adherence to suspense for its own sake.

4. The Skepticism of negation; by which I mean the continued denial of all the facts of experience and existence, until the unbeliever gradually reduces himself to semi-extinction or half-consciousness. This is generally the form which Doubt and Free-speculation have taken in India when they are found combined with Pessimism:—The philosophical denial of the facts of existence as uncertain, together with a morbid estimate of them considered as positive ills, passing into a stage in which existence itself becomes the greatest of evils, and requiring to be abrogated as far as possible by an excessive self-abnegation which is called knowledge, but which is in reality self-annihilation. Of course, this complete negation may easily assume the aspect of Dogmatism: because, as the Greek Skeptics truly saw, negation can be as haughtily self-satisfied, imperious, and exacting as the most rigid and tyrannical affirmation.

5. The Skepticism of suspense or genuine Pyrrhonism; by which I mean, either (1) the deliberate assertion of premisses and principles which inevitably, though it may be unconsciously, lead to open and confessed uncertainty; or (2) the distinct adoption, wholly or partially, and after full enquiry, of intellectual suspense as the only possible goal of philosophic research.

The last is properly speaking the only species with which our proposed inquiry is concerned, though we may find it needful to include sometimes the Skepticism of pure inquiry. . . . Whether our scheme is to comprehend the Skepticism of negation will depend on our starting point. Shall we commence with a complete survey of ancient Skepticism, or confine our attention chiefly to modern Skepticism, *i.e.* from

the Christian era? In the latter case we shall not require to investigate at any length pure negation, as that is a form of speculation to which the Indo-Germanic races of Europe are averse; though even among our modern Skeptics we sometimes find philosophical Skepticism passing into a profound, intuitive, and unquestioning mysticism.

HARRINGTON. For several reasons I think we must limit our inquiry to the moderns. Besides the fuller interest attaching to names which come nearest our own time, modern Skepticism is as a rule less defiant and extravagant, and therefore, to the modern intellect, less repellent, than the complete suspense of the Greeks, or the extreme negation of the Hindoos. . . . Perhaps, however, an outline of Pre-Christian Skepticism would enable us better to appreciate the contrast between the unbeliefs of the old and those of the modern world.

TREVOR. That I would engage to furnish; indeed, any detailed examination of modern Skeptics which did not include a survey of their predecessors among other races and religions would be obviously imperfect.

ARUNDEL. I also think we must confine ourselves chiefly to the moderns. The field is amply sufficient for amateur philosophers as we are to start with, and it is a mistake for young beginners in Philosophy-culture as in Agri-culture—to take too large a farm. . . . Recurring to your classification of Skepticisms. While I think it intelligible and useful, there is one exception which I must take to it. In your 5th or genuine Skeptic class you appear to include unconscious unbelievers. You surely cannot be in earnest in this, for if we are to pronounce Skeptics all who unknowingly maintain irreconcilable beliefs, our survey will include the majority of the human race. We ought to be careful in this as in other cases, when, *e.g.* heresy is impugned, not to impute to any one tenets which he does not openly avow.

TREVOR. I don't think you quite comprehend my definition: what I mean is, that we should regard as virtual Skeptics, not only those who profess to be doubters, but those also who, whether consciously or not, assert principles which can only lead legitimately to Skeptical conclusions. You

would not hesitate to affirm *e.g.* that a man who refused to credit the normal and healthy action of his senses, who declined *i.e.* to believe his eyes, when operating under favourable conditions, was possessed of a skeptical tendency; or again he who should choose to deny the universality of the Law of Identity or Excluded Middle must, if a sane man, be a doubter. The Theologian, for instance, who should lay down as equally true the contrary propositions that the universe is governed by God and that it is ruled by the Devil, must, if a reasonable being, be considered a Skeptic. Similarly, the Philosopher who maintains that 2 + 2 make 4 in philosophy, but 5 in theology, must also lie open to the imputation of doubt. Our main attribute of Skepticism is hesitation and suspense—the withholding assent in the presence of contrary beliefs. Hence, in my opinion, if a man maintains dogmas not merely irreconcilable, but of such a nature that the affirmation of the one postulates the denial of the other, even though he has never realized his intellectual position, we must say that he has all the needful qualifications of Skepticism. The Greeks had a synonym for Skepticism, *Isostheneia*, which implied the maintenance of an equilibrium between contradictory tenets or dogmas.

HARRINGTON. I am inclined to think you are right, Doctor. Your distinction will allow us to comprehend William of Ockam and other mediæval thinkers, with their favourite tenet that what is true in Philosophy may be false in Theology; as well as such a thinker as Kant with his Antinomies and Categorical Imperatives. All such thinkers in my opinion distinctly enunciate Skeptical principles, though they would strongly deprecate the title of Skeptics.

TREVOR. I confess I have some little doubt as to the propriety of including in our list eminent examples of men who were Skeptics during a part of their lives, but afterwards became founders of dogmatic systems; *e.g.* such men as Augustine and Descartes. No doubt these may be included under our 3rd Class of Skepticisms, although their unbelief was not *consciously* adopted as a basis for the dogmatic superstructure erected upon it.

ARUNDEL. By all means let us include these. Indepen-

dently of the general consideration, that our plan should embrace every species and every outcome of modern Skepticism, there is for me at least the profound interest of watching such intellectual Pilgrims, after being like Bunyan's Christian half swallowed up in the Gulf of Despond, recovering themselves and finding a firm footing on the other side.

HARRINGTON. I also think we ought to consider them, provided we bear in mind the temporary and limited nature of their Skepticism. As a rule, we cannot be too careful in estimating a man's genuine opinions by the half-formed convictions of his youth. The absurdity of this is incidentally illustrated by the story of the man who was exhibiting the supposed head of John the Baptist, and the objection being made that the skull was not that of an adult, immediately answered that it was his head when he was a little boy. Most growing men would deprecate being judged by their 'little-boy skulls.'

MISS LEYCESTER. Meanwhile, I am longing to ask why we should make ourselves responsible for the definition of what has been so long in existence. Cannot you tell us the best of the many definitions which Greek Philosophers at different times propounded on the subject?

TREVOR. For the best Greek definition we must, I think, apply to Sextos Empeirikos, the Prince of Greek Skeptics. That given by him appears to me an admirable example of terse and compendious definition, and is of itself a proof of the eminent fitness of the Greek tongue for philosophical exposition. It is literally 'the power or art of making antitheses both of phænomena and of Noumena,'[1] or if for the sake of the ladies I may venture a paraphrase, 'the art of putting in mutual opposition both the perceptions of the senses and the ideas and conclusions of the intellect.' This is, I think, sufficiently exhaustive, especially with the proviso which Sextos is careful to make, that such opposition may occur in any manner whatsoever. The Greek Skeptics

[1] *Pyrr. Hyp.* book i. chap. iv. 'Ἔστι δὲ ἡ σκεπτικὴ δύναμις ἀντιθετικὴ φαινομένων τε καὶ νοουμένων,' which Buhle in his Translation of the Hypotyposes thus well renders, 'Die Skepsis ist das Vermögen die Sinnenerscheinungen und Verstandesobjecte einander auf irgend eine Weise entgegenzusetzen.'—P. 5.

were not, I am bound to confess, very scrupulous either as to the nature or degree of the required antithetical.

ARUNDEL. Very true, Trevor, my small acquaintance with them enables me to bear witness to that. But what has always amused me in this definition, is the cool determination of your friends the Greek Skeptics not to be satisfied with any conclusion, no matter how it is come by, or what its demonstrative cogency might happen to be, and so proclaiming themselves the 'Irreconcilables' of philosophy. For this reason the definition of Sextos, though an admirable description of Pyrrhonism, appears to me too extreme to mark the more moderate Skepticism we are likely to meet with among modern free-thinkers.

HARRINGTON. I also agree with you that Sextos's definition is too exclusively Greek; it says nothing of denial or negation *per se*. It will be useful for us to bear in mind the distinction that, while Skepticism together with all other Greek terms for philosophical unbelief imply inquiry and suspense, rather than denial; our English usage of the word comprehends the latter as well. It seems a pity that we do not avail ourselves of terms in our own tongue which would express the difference between negation and suspense. We use the words *disbelief* and *unbelief* as synonyms; but it would be advantageous to distinguish between *unbelief* as the mere non-affirmation or position of neutrality, and *disbelief* as implying dissidence in the sense of hostility.

TREVOR. Our use of the word Skepticism to mark both suspense or tacit negation of, and open rebellion to dogma arises in this way: men start from positive dogma as from a normal condition or standard of things. Hence the mere refusal to recognise it—its non-affirmation—is held to be blameworthy; while distinct opposition to it implies only a greater *degree* of culpability: so that in this altered meaning of Skepticism compared with its use in Greek philosophy, we have an incidental illustration of the effect of Christian dogmatism in modifying the signification of philosophical terms. . . . No doubt, at first sight and from the point of view of modern unbelief, the definition of Sextos seems extreme, yet we shall find that it includes tendencies common

to all Skeptics, and moreover has a special application in Christian Skepticism to the continual opposition of the two great antitheticals, Faith and Reason.

ARUNDEL. I suppose then we must agree to accept it: meanwhile I am trying to realise the social and personal qualities of the men who devised this curious confession of philosophic faith. What a disagreeable contradictory set of people they must have been! Imagine having to live with a human being whose religious creed and 'whole duty of man' consisted in finding antitheticals to everything you or any one else might affirm, no matter how transparently obvious it might be. As to their boast of attaining *Ataraxia* or philosophic calm, they could only effect it in the same way that Irishmen enjoy quietness, 'who are never at peace but when fighting.' If the Greek Skeptics wanted a kind of philosophers' coat of arms, I would suggest two surly curs growling over a bone.

MISS LEYCESTER. Except that the surly curs, notwithstanding their ostensible occupation and their audible growls, are careful to affirm the non-existence of all bones. Hence your simile, Mr. Arundel, is more applicable to the contentions of creeds and sects over some disputed dogma; to which indeed it has been applied.

HARRINGTON. This *antithetical* character in social and humble life is very neatly and literally discriminated by the epithet 'contrairy' which in the country you often hear applied to contradictory people. You remember Charles Lamb's humorous description[1] of an individual of this species among his relations:—'He hath been heard to deny upon certain occasions that there exists such a faculty at all in man as *Reason*, and wondereth how man came first to have a conceit of it, enforcing his negation with all the might of *reasoning* he is master of'—words by the way eminently applicable to every self-contradictory Skeptic, as *e.g.* Pyrrhôn.

TREVOR. You are not quite fair to my poor Skeptics. The antitheses of Sextos's definition need not necessarily have been of their own devising; indeed the main purpose for which a Skeptic would require an antithetical would be

[1] Elia—'My Relations.'

self-defence. These antitheses they merely used as points from which to compute their own position. They sought for contradictions and contraries, as a man might wish to discover contentious neighbours, in order to keep as far away from them as possible. They marked extreme opinions as they would the circumference of a circle of which they meant to occupy the unmoving and immoveable centre. They wished to determine the mean of pure neutrality between dogmas of every kind. Hence a complimentary estimate would assign to them in Philosophy the position which Aristotle assigns to Virtue in Ethics—the mean between two extremes. I do not see why Skeptics should have a distinctive coat of arms or emblematic Trade-mark any more than other philosophers; but supposing one needed, what could you have better than that suggested by Lucian[1]? —'Justice with equally poised scales'—an emblem, by the way, which Montaigne adopted as his philosophical escutcheon,[2] and which Diderot[3] made the centre-piece of the banner which he devised for advanced Skeptics.

HARRINGTON. But Lucian's emblem merely represents Justice in her static condition impartial and unbiassed. She has a dynamic position as well when she holds the uplifted sword ready to strike. It would be an ill day for lawyers and their clients if the indecision of Justice were, like that of Skeptics, her perpetual, never-ceasing characteristic.

ARUNDEL. Bad for lawyers, Harrington!—not for their clients; who would to their own incalculable advantage speedily cease to exist. But instead of a balance, I would suggest another emblem for Skepticism, bearing indeed some affinity to it as well as to a mean position between two extremes, but not being quite so honourable or safe for those who trust it—I mean the fate which a very familiar proverb assigns to a man who tries to sit between two stools.

TREVOR. To your objection, Harrington, I would reply

[1] *Vitarum Auctio*, § 27. *Opera*, Ed. Didot, p. 153.

[2] Cf. *Pascal*, par Faugère, i. 353.

[3] *La Promenade du Sceptique. Œuv. Comp.* Ed. Garnier, i. 217. 'Cette troupe n'avait point eu d'étendard, lorsqu'il y a environ deux cents ans un de ses champions en imagina un. C'est une balance en broderie d'or, d'argent, de laine et de soie, avec ces mots pour devise: *Que sais-je?*——'

in the words of Pascal,[1] 'Justice and Truth are two *points* so subtle, that our instruments are too dull to touch either of them exactly,' though of course the needs of social life make some approximate and partial justice necessary. As to your remark, Arundel, you must remember that a proverb or illustration is not an argument. Anyhow we are not the heralds of Skepticism but the historians of Skeptics. . . . Returning to our subject, I may assume that we are satisfied with the definition of Sextos and with the limitations of our subject which I have ventured to suggest. In that case, I will, if you have no objection, commence my promised paper:—

On the General Causes of Skepticism.

Thus saying, Dr. Trevor took a roll of MS. from his pocket and read as follows:—

Skepticism in the fullest sense of the term must be admitted to be inherent in the human mind, inasmuch as it is a definition of one of its most ordinary and necessary operations. It is not a little curious, when we examine the derivation of the word, to find that with all its present implication of doubt and uncertainty, it is an outcome of the sense of all others, whose perceptions are supposed to be most direct and immediate, and on that account most certain—the sense of sight. This fact is significant (as Miss Leycester has just reminded us); for the undoubted progress of a word from one meaning to another, and its final settling down in a given acceptation, must, I conceive, have something corresponding to it in the laws and processes of the human mind, or in the facts of nature or history. For the purposes of this essay, I must, however, ask leave to use the word Skepticism in the sense in which we customarily employ it in English, as indicating both free inquiry and a consequent tendency to incredulity (negation), or acquiescence in uncertainty (suspense). To narrow the term in the inquiry I now propose to institute, to the technical signification it acquired in the schools of Pyrrhôn and Ainesidêmos, however useful for classification, appears to me unworthy of the philosophical inquirer; who sees in the entire growth and evolution of any mental movement, and not merely in its mature phase of development, subjects of the highest interest: and to whom Skepti-

[1] *Pens.* ed. Havet. i. 35. Comp. i. 38, 70.

cism commends itself in its true philosophical aspect, as a mode of thought which in varying degrees has characterised some of the greatest intellects, both of ancient and modern times.

The causes of Skepticism are twofold: general and special. By general causes, I mean those that are always and everywhere in operation. Causes which depend on the constitution of the world, on the nature of the human faculties, and their methods of acquiring and communicating knowledge. It is to these that I purpose in the following remarks to confine myself. But in passing, I may observe that special causes as well may, and often do, exercise an enormous influence on the Skeptical development, either of a particular epoch or of an individual. In the first case the extent of dogmatism, or at least philosophical quiescence in the preceding period; the mental activity actually current in philosophy, theology, or politics; the personal influence or teaching of some great epoch-making thinker, constitute special causes which must be taken into account: while in the case of the individual, his own education and training, or perhaps some special idiosyncrasy or intellectual bias, or the tendency of the thought of the day, either or all may have contributed to form in him a Skeptical mind. Of these causes, all more or less obvious, and most of which we shall have again to consider during the course of our investigations, I do not now purpose saying anything more.

I. Turning to general causes of Skepticism, I conceive the first to be the constitution of the world—the infinite extent and variety of the laws and operations of the universe. Fully believing as I do the truth of the old maxim, '*Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius in sensu*,' I always go to the world without for an explanation of the world within. I expect to find in the macrocosm a reflection of the microcosm:—

Im Innern ist ein Universum auch.

When I adopt this course in this instance, what do I find? Why I find innumerable phenomena, infinite in variety, immeasurable in extent, and, so far as my conception of time allows me to judge, in duration as well. I find this wondrous array of phenomena apparently moving in a stately and regular procession, and governed by unalterable laws; and yet beneath all this apparent uniformity and harmony, further research enables me to detect a diversity almost as infinite. I discover the action of one law modified in a countless variety of modes and degrees by that of another. I find one effect, by which I mean the outcome of any cause or causes,

sometimes aided, sometimes thwarted, oftentimes perverted, perhaps entirely destroyed by another; so that the general result of the action and reaction in every conceivable mode of all these countless laws, processes, modifying agencies, &c., is to produce on the mind a most embarrassing *tout ensemble* of causes and effects, activities and passivities, order and disorder, law and lawlessness; so that the cosmos assumes the appearance of an ill-regulated chaos, and the universe seems a tangled skein, inviting, and at the same time defying disentanglement.

Nor is this feeling of embarrassment, which arises from the contemplation of the universe as a whole, greatly lessened if we confine our attention to one single phenomenon, and select for the purpose that which seems to us most obvious; for in every such case, immediately underlying the phenomenal aspect, we discover ulterior agencies, qualities, relations, &c., which on examination turn out to be just as inscrutable as if the phenomenon itself were veiled in the most impenetrable mystery. When a man's mental faculties, well awakened by study and reflection, and unrestrained by prejudice or bias, are brought to bear on a world of this kind, what wonder is it that he should feel uncertainty, embarrassment, and disappointment; that the universe should seem to him as to the Greek philosopher, an ever-flowing river; or as to the Hindoo thinker, a mere visionary unsubstantial pageant; or as to the Hebrew Skeptic, a 'vanity of vanities'! What marvel if his final mental attitude in the presence of so many conflicting facts and assurances, were the *epochē* or suspense of the ancient Skeptics, or the *je ne sçay pas* of their modern successors. The effect may perhaps be illustrated by the supposed case of a thoughtful, imaginative child, who, after being confined within four walls until he was eleven or twelve years of age, should then be suddenly hurried through rapidly changing scenery, or through the crowded streets of a large town.[1] We can in some measure appreciate the feelings of strangeness, wonderment, and doubt with which he would survey such a bewildering succession of different views; and if, as we have assumed, he were a boy of an imaginative turn of mind, we might perhaps succeed in persuading him that he was surveying not an actually existing series of realities, but the fitful changes

[1] Similar illustrations are frequently employed in philosophy, sometimes, it must be admitted, in the interests of varying, nay, even opposite systems of Thought. Thus the famous cave simile of Plato's *Republic* (vi.), adduced as a picturesque argument in behalf of Extreme Idealism, is employed by Bacon to advocate reasonable Skepticism. *De Aug. Sci.* book v. chap. iv. *Works*, by Ellis and Spedding, i. p. 645.

of an unreal dream. It is only the dull listless acquiescence produced by habit, and slavish deference to the opinions of others, that rob us of that feeling of combined strangeness, awe, and wonder which ought to be the ordinary and befitting attitude of thoughtful men in presence of the innumerable unsolved problems of the universe. I confess I have never seen the effect which thi infinite manifoldness is calculated to produce on reflective and imaginative minds treated with the importance it merits. It appears to me to operate as a producing cause of more than one of the so-called eccentricities of the human intellect. I certainly find no difficulty in tracing both mysticism and pantheism to its influence. While as to Skepticism, I believe it to warrant the whole of the inquiring and most of the uncertain spirit implied in the term. Indeed, nothing seems to me more appropriate than the attitude of the cautious, searching, doubting inquirer in such an universe as I have attempted to describe. It is on a boundless plain that men need to grope their way (and what is Skepticism but *groping*?), and not when confined by strong boundaries and prominent landmarks on every side.

II. Now, add to this infinite extent and variety of the world without the correspondingly measureless activities of the world within. Conceive a being placed in such an universe gifted with powers of thought and reason, and with an unquenchable desire after knowledge, endowed with keen, eager senses and analytical faculties, capable of investigating to a greater or less extent most of the varied phenomena by which he is surrounded; but at the same time from the very keenness of his faculties, from the enormous, I might almost say infinite, sweep of their imaginative and speculative powers, utterly incapable of any full, absolute demonstration of one single truth, and what can be more evident than that the inevitable destiny of such a being must be a continual, never-ending search: that, in a word, the more critical the faculties, the more comprehensive the vision of such an intellect, the greater will be the impossibility of obtaining a perfect unimpeachable demonstration; just as the more powerful the telescope the greater the immensity of space which it reveals, or the more profound the geological and astronomical research the more immeasurable becomes the recession of time. Nay, that inherent infinity which pertains to time and space, appears to me an essential property of the human reason as well—I mean that its desires and hopes are so boundless, its cravings for truth so multiform and insatiable, its appetite for knowledge so omnivorous and inappeasable, that its tendencies we may certainly affirm (in harmony with the wisest

and profoundest thinkers of all time) to be towards the infinite.

In order further to exemplify this, let us consider the conduct of the human intellect:—1. When it claims to be in possession of the truth: 2. When it deals with problems confessedly insoluble.

1. In the first place, let us assume that on some one given subject the intellect imagines itself to possess ultimate irrefragable truth. Does anyone acquainted with its nature and tendencies suppose it will be perfectly satisfied with that conclusion, without further inquiry and speculation? for let the fact itself be as obvious and unimpeachable as possible, the questions may still be asked, 'Whence is it?' or, 'Why?' or, 'How is it so?' By the first two queries, we attempt to seize a link in the infinite chain of causation, and if the attempt succeeds we try to grasp the next link, and so *ad infinitum*. Or putting the last question, 'How is it?' in order to get at the mode and circumstance of a supposed truth-presentation, and what an endless vista of speculation and possibility is immediately suggested to the still unsatisfied intellect. Does *e.g.* the conviction it possesses of such a truth and its ultimate certainty depend upon the manner in which it is perceived, or is it, so far as we are able to judge, entirely independent of all such human relations? And whether its perception be related to the intellect or not, yet it must be relative to a number greater or less of other collateral truths, and such a fact immediately challenges comparison and discussion. Or perhaps the intellect will endeavour, simple and undecomposable as the truth may seem, to analyse, and, if possible, resolve it into its primary constituent elements; and each of such elements may conceivably be made the subject of further analysis and decomposition; so restlessly eager, so insatiably curious does the human mind approve itself, not only with respect to the supposed truth in itself, but also with regard to its origin, its composition, and its relation, real or feigned, to other truths. In a word, no proof or demonstration of any given truth can be even hypothetically conceived, so complete and comprehensive that all further research would be deemed useless or impertinent.

A striking proof, were any needed, of this proposition, is at once afforded us by the well-known fact, that there is no truth so simple, self-evident, and indubitable, as not to have been again and again called in question by different thinkers and schools of philosophy. The reliableness of our sense-perceptions and the facts of consciousness have been repeatedly impugned, both in ancient and in modern times. The non-existence of a material world has been a fundamental article in the creed of more than one philosophical

system. The *ego* itself has been reduced by various modes to inanition and intellectual extinction; and whereas nothing seems at first sight more axiomatic and final than the primary truths of arithmetic and geometry, yet thinkers of all ages have not only speculated eagerly on the whence and the why of such truths, but have even taxed their imaginations to the extent of conceiving worlds in which 2 + 2 might make 5. If these well-known facts are insufficient to prove the inherent Skepticism of the speculative intellect, this can only be attributed to the very self-same tendency, and is, in truth, a strong confirmation of its existence.

2. But if the human intellect in presence of truths generally supposed to be indubitable and compulsory, reveals a Skeptical bias, we find precisely the same disposition manifested in its mode of dealing with problems confessedly insoluble. Its unwillingness or inability to concede an absolute negation is just as strong as its indisposition or powerlessness to grant an unconditional affirmation. Among the numerous questions which have engaged the attention of the human mind, there are many which are not only, on account of our present imperfect knowledge, incapable of receiving even an approximate solution, but of which we are unable to conceive, with every allowance for the attainments of the future, the bare possibility of their ever receiving such a solution. Let us take as an instance the origin of the universe. I must confess myself quite unable to conceive, even hypothetically, a theory on the subject of so simple and undoubted a character, as to exclude all further speculation and inquiry. And yet upon this inscrutable matter a countless variety of theories have been propounded, from the mythological fables of remote antiquity to the nebular hypothesis of our own day.[1] And, probably, unless the nature of the human intellect changes considerably from what it is at present, there never will come a time when speculation on such an abstruse subject will finally cease, from the recognition of the patent fact, that anything approaching a complete solution of the problem is a self-evident impossibility.[2]

[1] These words were written some years ago, but no one acquainted with the most recent results of astronomical research, will require to be told that the nebular hypothesis has now received its quietus, leaving apparently no theory to occupy its place. At present, so far as Physicists are concerned, the Universe is an orphan.

[2] 'Cependant c'est une des principales et des plus ordinaires maladies de l'homme d'estre travaillé d'une curiosité inquiète pour des choses qu'il ne peut sçavoir, et qu'il lui est vraisemblement plus avantageux d'ignorer que d'en prendre connoissance, puisque Dieu a limité la sphère d'activité de son âme, qui ne peut pas pénétrer jusques-là.' *La-Mothe-le-Vayer, Soliloques Sceptique*, Ed. Liseux, p. 2.

Or take another question—the exact mode in which our sensations are formed. It is hardly too much to say that from the very nature of the case an adequate explanation of this mysterious fact is simply inconceivable. The requisite and only possible conditions of successful investigation are manifestly unattainable. Nor can I conceive any advance in the sciences of Physiology and Psychology sufficiently great as to remove this inherent impossibility. And yet there is scarce any subject-matter of human inquiry which has received so much attention from psychologists on the one hand and physiologists on the other. Indeed, most of this labour has been expended without any great prospect of a satisfactory result, so far as definite knowledge is concerned, perhaps without even expecting the final solution of so profound an enigma.

In a word, the mental energies of men in these and in the numberless other cases which might have been adduced, seem to me like a wild beast perpetually measuring with restless paces the extreme limits of the cage from which it has nevertheless long since ascertained there can be no escape; or like a watchful army surrounding a fortress which it cannot but admit to be impregnable, it is yet continually belying its admission by its conduct, for it is always on the look-out for some unguarded corner or weak position by which an entry may haply be effected. It should, however, be remembered as some set-off against such hopeless enterprises and unrealised desires, that these ceaseless attempts to accomplish impossibilities are not only the intellectual instincts of our race, but are incidentally productive of good results. Weaker fortresses, themselves once deemed impregnable, have been forced to succumb in some degree to such unsleeping vigilance. Besides, soldiers ever on the alert attain a continual increase of efficiency, and if, notwithstanding all their efforts, they fail to achieve what is impossible, they must admit, *if they can*, such failure to be nothing less than inevitable.

A further cause for the inability of our faculties to attain complete demonstration is to be found in the individual and isolated character of every perception or idea we possess. Each act of sensation or reflection is a single independent fact of consciousness, having its own individual colouring, characteristics, and extent. So that not only are our faculties limited in respect of their own inherent powers, but they are further limited as regards their participation in any common stock of universal Truth. The individual differences which characterise our powers of perceiving and of thinking were known to and acknowledged by the

philosophers of Greece many centuries ago. It formed, indeed, a part of the creed of every eminent Greek thinker from the time of Protagoras and his aphorism, 'Man is the measure of all things,' to the final elaboration of the doctrine in the schools of the later Skeptics. Nor were they backward in applying such a cogent argument to refute dogmatic conclusions and general systems of belief, which were avowedly based on the common consent of humanity. Within a recent date this individuality of sense-perceptions, or 'personal equation,' as it has been called, has been recognised by scientists of our own day, and has become in certain astronomical experiments a necessary part of the calculations pertaining to them. But in point of fact this 'personal equation' is true not only of the *modus operandi* of the senses, but of all the definitions and determinations of the intellect—the nature and extent of every idea, the quality and scope of every imagination, the meaning attached to words and propositions; in a word, to every part and outcome of the apparatus which man employs as a reasoning being. Hence each individual has his own private mirror, in which is reflected each part and parcel of his knowledge. And when we bring all these reflections together in order to establish, as we think, universal and impregnable truth, we cannot be surprised if the whole should present the appearance of a piece of glass cut into numberless facets, and that any object reflected by it should be diverse and multitudinous rather than uniform and identical.

Nor would the behaviour of the human intellect be, I conceive, greatly altered were its limitations to some extent removed, and its present faculties immeasurably increased both in number and efficiency. If, *e.g.*, like Voltaire's Micromegas, we were gifted with a thousand senses instead of five, our fate would probably still be that so plaintively described by the inhabitant of Sirius: 'Il nous reste encore je ne sais quel désir vague, je ne sais quelle inquiétude, qui nous avertit sans cesse que nous sommes peu de chose, et qu'il y a des êtres beaucoup plus parfaits.'[1] Nay, we have good warrant for assuming that such an enlargement in the number and scope of our faculties would only produce a corresponding increase in the number of questions to be solved and, *ipso facto*, of difficulties in their solution. Hence the possessor of five senses, if a skeptic, would, were his senses increased to a thousand, probably become in direct arithmetical ratio two hundred times more skeptical than before. Let us suppose for a moment that we were endowed with some such enormous increase in the number,

[1] *Micromegas, Hist. philosophique*, chap. ii.

variety, and power of our senses and mental faculties as that suggested by Voltaire; that we were able, for instance, to comprehend by methods now inconceivable the real causes and modes of working of all the great physical forces by which we are surrounded; that we could perceive the molecular changes that take place in electricity and magnetism as readily as we can see the movement of our own limbs; that we could hear the sap percolating through the cells and capillary tubes of all kinds of vegetation, from the tiniest herb to the loftiest tree, as easily as we can hear the rush of water through a drain-pipe; that we could see and number the vibrations of light or sound-waves as readily as we can reckon our paces; that we could feel the changes in our brain-substance which are said to be the invariable antecedents of all our different states of consciousness as quickly and keenly as we feel the pain of a blow; that, lastly, we could trace those subtle links which form our mental associations with no more difficulty than we can number the links of a chain we hold in our hands, and that all dialectical processes were as vividly presented to our inner senses as the most crude, mechanical operation might be to our bodily senses, and the inevitable result of such a stupendous addition to our faculties and modes of knowledge would be a proportionate increase in our bewilderment, and an enlarged scope for curiosity and incredulity. So that the truth of the Hebrew Skeptic's maxim is amply attested by the whole history of Skepticism, 'He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow,' or as Shelley in his magnificent play has expressed the same sentiment, by making the furies reproach Prometheus:—

> Dost thou boast the clear knowledge thou waken'dst for man?
> Then was kindled within him a thirst which outran
> These perishing waters; a thirst of fierce fever,
> Hope, love, doubt, desire, which consume him for ever.

Instead, then, of supposing that an extension of our present powers would operate as an antidote to Skepticism, we must, I suspect, proceed in the very opposite direction. What is needed is not the extension, but the still further limitation of our reasoning faculties. We with our five senses, elaborated and enhanced by the gifts of reason and imagination, are in point of fact only too well equipped to find perfect satisfaction in the result of our investigations. It is a melancholy instance of the mixed nature of our divinest gifts that the very faculty by which we reason is that which enables and incites us to doubt, that the means we adopt in order to construct is like a builder's scaffolding, equally

available for purposes of destruction, and that those nations and individuals are freest from Skepticism which are closest akin to brutes and idiots. Hence we may term doubt the Nemesis of faith, the inevitably reactionary consequence of dogmatism. It presupposes reasoning and intelligence, it postulates systematised beliefs, convictions which have attained a greater or less degree of coherence and stability. It is therefore the outcome, not of ignorance, but of culture; the characteristic, not of the childhood, but of the mature age of mankind. No traces of Skepticism appear in Greek or Hindoo philosophy until long after the formation and establishment of numerous systems of belief and speculation, and in most languages of uncultured nations there is no word for doubt.

III. Another cause of Skepticism may be found in the necessary relations between human reason and its creature and instrument, human language. This is, of course, a very large subject, and I cannot do more than point out a few instances in which the unavoidable uncertainty pertaining to the use of language seems to be a prolific source of Skepticism.

1. Let us first glance at the mode by which we acquire knowledge. We shall find, I think, that it affords a proof both of the necessity and uncertainty of human language. To the child or uneducated adult the object of an act of perception is indistinguishable from the perception itself. The tree, *e.g.* which is seen, is the same object as the image of it imprinted on the retina or retained in the memory; and this confusion is shown in the language employed, which for the most part makes no distinction between the outward object and its ideal representation, calling both by a common name. But no sooner is this unavoidable conjunction of the real and ideal analysed, than it is seen that a discrepancy may and often must exist between the actual object and its mental representation. The senses, *e.g.* cannot always be depended upon for giving a perfectly accurate account of the phenomena submitted to them, and therefore the terminology which assumes and seeks to express such accuracy must be faulty and unreliable. Hence the continual mistakes made by the senses in the judgments of perception may be said to constitute the first chapter in every systematic treatise on Skepticism. Nor is it easy to see how with the possession of senses of much greater accuracy, or of a language in which all mental abstractions were duly differentiated and distinguished from real objects, the danger of some such confusion could be altogether averted.

Moreover, a man's language, with all its immense variety of

terms, forms, direct meanings, and connotations, is, as I have before hinted, essentially individualistic. Therefore the group of sensations, qualities, &c., which he expresses by a single term may and generally must be either greater or less than the corresponding group to which his neighbour nevertheless applies precisely the same term. For example, the cluster of sensations to which I affix the names, sun, tree, house, will not be exactly the same cluster in all its parts and relations as that to which another man applies the same words. And if this inequality exists in our sense-perceptions with their definite modes of presentation, its probability will be much greater in purely mental abstractions, in which the convergent ideas are or may be both indefinite and voluntary.[1] Nor is there any mode of inter-communication between man and man by which this difference in their perceptions and ideas can be infallibly determined. Almost the very first words employed in Greek philosophy to express what afterwards became known as Skepticism indicated and implied this inevitable difference between the meanings of the same word when employed by different persons. We find also that most words, in this respect reflecting the state of mind of their originators, represent not single, uniform, clearly defined ideas, but rather clusters or groups of ideas. When, *e.g.* we take any good dictionary in hand, we observe around each principal word or root, like satellites round a planet, a crowd of synonyms, derivative terms, correlated ideas and expressions. What does this phenomenon signify if not the puny efforts of language to overtake the rapid advance and extension of human knowledge, the endeavours of the finite and limited to adapt itself to the wants of the infinite?

2. A second cause of the uncertainty inherent in language, and therefore of its aid to Skepticism, may be found in the use of general terms. Let us take, for example, such words as red, sound, colour, smell, &c. In these and similar terms it is plainly impossible, with all the adjectives, adverbs, or other qualifying terms we can bring together, to mark distinctly every degree or gradation of our perceptions of their object, still less of their real actual existence. Hence we perceive that, regarded as the only

[1] On this ambiguity the elder Mill has some remarks in his *Human Mind*, i. p. 141. Of course the fact here pointed out is still more glaringly true of nations and races using different tongues. On the variation in extent of signification between correlated terms in different languages see *Geiger, Ursprung u. Entwickelung d. Menschlichen Sprache*, i. p. 14. Compare on the same point *Sextos Empeirikos adv. Grammaticos*, Kuhne's edition, pp. 38, 39.

medium of communication between man and the universe, language labours under a twofold impotency; it is incommensurate with the infinite nature of the external world on the one hand, and with the immeasurable capacities and desires of the human mind on the other. Man with all his naming and defining powers, his entire equipment of dictionaries and grammars, his access to various languages, may still be compared to a child introduced into an enormous museum with a pocketful of labels, and told to mark and classify the innumerable objects which it contains. The child-like man in the museum of Nature finds his task beset with difficulties. Sometimes one label has to do duty for several, or it is found needful to affix two labels to a single object. Ultimately the labels fall short of the endless requirements, and though new supplies are furnished from time to time, yet the objects being innumerable in themselves, while new qualities and relations pertaining to them are continually being discovered, the supply of labels must needs be relatively limited. So that the full naming and classification of all is found to be impossible. And even when most pains have been taken, the designation and arrangement of the best labelled articles are discovered on close investigation to be very imperfect.

3. Another circumstance which makes language an involuntary instrument of Skepticism is the fact that, by an association easily explicable, we are led to believe that every word or name must express and postulate a real object. Accordingly when exigencies of speculation demand the invention and employment of such names as the infinite, the absolute, fate, chance, &c., we are almost irresistibly compelled to believe that these terms stand for real existences, and it is only when we try to comprehend and realise such abstractions that we discover our mistake. This tendency is, moreover, increased by the use of the substantive verb in most modern languages as the copula in predication.[1] When we come to discuss our modern Skeptics we shall find that most of them are Nominalists, *i.e.* they maintain that these general abstractions are only names; and we shall, I think, be further convinced of the service which Skepticism has thus rendered by its nominalistic tendencies to the cause of real science, and to the prevention and refutation of religious and philosophical superstition.

4. A fourth cause of the uncertainty which belongs to language may be found in its perpetual change and flux. Not only is

[1] Compare Mill's *Human Mind*, vol. i. p. 175.

every living language continually undergoing slow but perceptible modification, but every word of which it is composed is subject to constant variation from one shade of meaning to another. Instances of so familiar and acknowledged a truth are needless; but the fact itself, even if it stood alone, would serve to show the hazard of building demonstration or absolute truth on the frail and fluctuating foundation of human language.

IV. Another and most powerful stimulus to Skepticism is found in the innate love of freedom and independence which is a well-known characteristic of all original minds. 'There be,' says Bacon in his Essay on Truth, 'that delight in giddinesse, and count it a bondage to fix a belief; affecting free will in thinking as well as in acting.'[1] In truth, what Bacon seems to regard as a mere want of stability and an occasional eccentricity in human speculation, is of much greater scope and importance; for the mutual opposition of necessity and free will is found to operate in the region of mental just as much as in that of moral science, in speculation as well as in action. Skepticism may therefore be termed the vindication of the absolute freedom of the human intellect. From his earliest infancy the mind of every man is exposed to a never-ceasing pressure from without of ostensible necessities, each of them having for its object the coercion, I might almost say the enslavement, of his intellectual faculties. In the first place the external phenomena of his own personal experience force themselves upon his intellect as an imperious necessity; next follow extra-sensible phenomena, which he is compelled to accept on the overpowering evidence of others; then there are certain conventional beliefs of social tradition and authority; and finally, certain dogmatic systems of philosophy and theology, until the intellect which was at first free and unrestrained is at last so thwarted and circumscribed, so cut and hewn, so forced and trained, that it bears just as little resemblance to its natural state, or that which it might conceivably attain by its own spontaneity and self-development, as the stunted shrub of our lawns and pleasure grounds does to the oak of the forest. Even granting, as we must, the educational value of many of these superimposed necessities, nay, further, the impossibility of conceiving any intellectual development without their aid, it is obvious to a reflecting mind that this enormous accumulation of extrinsic doctrines is greater than is really needed by or than can be thought useful to the average intellect. Moreover, the mental formation here spoken of labours under the defect of not being a

[1] *Essays.* Ellis and Spedding's *Works*, vi. p. 377,

man's own building. He is thus compelled, so to speak, to live in a house over whose plan, materials, and construction he has never exercised the least control, and which is probably utterly inadapted for his means, tastes, or necessities. As a rule it is overwhelmingly large, and contains numberless rooms and stories, passages and corridors, for which he has no use, and of which he does not even know the meaning. It is against this weighty incubus of authority, this overgrown structure of beliefs and opinions, that an original mind so vehemently recalcitrates. Such men as Augustine, Descartes, Locke are not satisfied with the conventional ideas and systems thus forced upon them. Finding within them an independent spirit and an architectonic talent, and being possessed of ample means, they refuse to live in any house but *their own*—that which they themselves have built from their own plans, with their own materials, and adapted primarily for their own wants. Accordingly, with the true restless Skeptical instinct, they go to work and examine this huge superstructure of knowledge (so called) in order to arrive at whatever amount of solid foundation and good material they may discover beneath; and though the whole of the old building may not be found to merit destruction, and much of the old material may again be used, yet the new house will be their own work, its erection will have satisfied powerful instincts, and it will subserve their own individual tastes and wants.

Besides, to minds of the class we are now considering—restless, independent, and, philosophically, somewhat libertine—every dogma assumes a specially offensive character. It purports to be an absolute boundary, or limitation of their faculties, beyond which research is impossible, and therefore impertinent. The effect of such a haughty assumption is immediately to challenge doubt and inquiry. An arbitrary restriction is placed where perhaps none existed before; or what was hitherto a mere boundary line has suddenly assumed formidable dimensions and become an impassable barrier. The disagreeable feeling created by this restraint is increased by the consciousness that, *in itself*, the intellect is altogether free and unimpeded, that no bound can, *in and by its own nature*, be placed to the range of its speculation and imagination. Hence comes the struggle between Skepticism and Dogmatism—the free will and necessity of philosophy. Hence the irresistible impulse on the part of Skeptics to test the strength of every dogma submitted to their notice, no matter how ancient or well assured its foundations are assumed to be, or how sacred and awful the sanctions by which it is surrounded. Nor to

the type of men now under consideration do these external compulsions become less irksome by the fact that by an invincible necessity they are compelled to submit to many of them,[1] or that they find a ready acquiescence with the bulk of humanity; for it is obvious that the minds which persistently search, and are determined to abide by the issue of their search, must always form a small and inappreciable minority of the human race. For my own part I am quite ready to concede provisionally the trustworthiness of many of our foundations in the present day of science, ethics, and religion; still this admission cannot blind me to the fact that even were our fundamental beliefs utterly and inherently absurd, yet if they were set forth and taught with skill and discrimination, invested with prestige, and enforced by authority, the mass of mankind would accept them fully and unreservedly; for belief as a rule is not a matter of personal search or knowledge, but of mere custom and habit.

It will no doubt be objected that the human reason, though it has a right to inquire, has no right to push its investigation to the extreme of self-annihilation or stultification. It ought, as some would say, to moderate its excessive demands, and there would then be some probability of its rightful claims being conceded. To this objection there are two replies: first may be urged the unfortunate but inherent tendency of every struggle after freedom to exceed the limits which prudence and moderation would assign it. As Cowper tells us:—

> . . . . . he who values Liberty, confines
> His zeal for her predominance within
> No narrow bounds . . . . .[2]

And, for my part, I have no hesitation in admitting, much as I prize the Skeptics, that their impatience of the least possible restraint, or perhaps only apparent restraint, has occasionally hurried them into extreme speculative licence. Such cases I regard with the same half-sympathetic, half-deprecatory feeling with which I look upon the excesses of the French Revolution, or any

[1] 'J'avoue,' says one of the lesser lights of French Skepticism in the last century, 'qu'il y a des idées si vraisemblables, qu'elles nous laissent à peine le tems, et presque jamais la force de douter: elles subjuguent notre esprit: mais cela ne sçauroit prouver qu'elles sont vraies.'—*Le Pyrrhonisme raisonnable*, par (Louis) de Beausobre, p. 39.

[2] In this respect, Le-Vayer compares Skepticism to dram- or wine-drinking:—'Non culpa vini sed culpa bibentis.'—*Œuv.* iii. part i. p. 315.

other great struggle after liberty.[1] Skepticism, as a philosophical mode of thought, can no more be considered responsible for the extremities of her unwise votaries than Luther can be made answerable for the extravagances of Carlstadt, Mirabeau for the excesses of Robespierre, or Cromwell for the fanaticism of Harrison or Lilburne. Besides which, a further justification of excessive Skepticism may be found in the fact that it has to contend generally with a dogmatism still more excessive;[2] and as Sextos Empeirikos remarks—not without a touch of humour—for an extreme disease an extreme remedy is needful. Indeed I would venture to say that for every extremity to which Skepticism has been pushed dogmatism is primarily responsible. For what system of belief has ever been authoritatively promulgated in the world that did not demand the most unconditional submission on the part of its adherents, and that not only to the system as a whole, but to every individual portion, every minute detail pertaining to it? It is not enough that we adore the idol from afar, but we are compelled to draw near and kiss its feet. Happily in the present day, though as yet very slowly, this injurious exigeant temper of dogmatists is beginning to be relaxed, and men are gradually learning the great lesson of toleration, and we may be sure that when taught by experience and moderation they cease to exact, as a harsh creditor does a debt, a full and uninquiring submission to dogmas, whether philosophical or religious, Skepticism will, in its turn, moderate its own demands, and be content with a high degree of probability, where it might otherwise have insisted on absolute demonstration.

V. In his definitions of the various kinds of philosophy, Christian Wolf has made the fear of committing error the *primum mobile* of Skepticism. Whether it is the only or even most general cause is, I think, open to doubt; but that it does exercise on some minds a very distinct and perceptible influence, is, in my

[1] Compare Schiller's glowing utterances:—

'Der Mensch ist frei geschaffen, ist frei
Und würd' er in Ketten geboren,
Lasst euch nicht irren des Pöbels Geschrei
Nicht den Missbrauch rasender Thoren.'

[2] Sextos explicitly lays down the rule, that the extent to which Skeptical arguments are carried should be duly proportioned to the strength of the dogmatic reasonings against which they are arrayed. Cf. *Pyr. Hyp.* iii. chap. 23. This was, in theory, required in order to maintain the perfect equipoise of negation and affirmation on which Pyrrhonic suspense was based. But it does not appear that Skeptics are more moderate and self-restrained in controversy than the most vehement of dogmatists.

opinion, beyond controversy. To the majority of mankind the reception of new, or the criticism and possible modification of old ideas, is rarely considered a matter of personal responsibility, and that, sometimes, of the gravest kind. Their ordinary behaviour in such cases seems to be this :—When a man has new ideas or items of knowledge submitted to him, if they happen to run in the groove of his own predilections and training, or are propounded by an authority to which he is accustomed to defer, he quickly gulps them down without examination or thought; but if they are of quite another kind, or come to him from a suspected source, he, with just as little heed, immediately discards them. As to anything like a critical examination of ideas long received, probably not one in ten thousand ever thinks of instituting such an inquiry; partly, perhaps, from an instinctive dread of that 'first step' to philosophy which Diderot, in some of his latest words, affirmed to be incredulity,[1] but chiefly, as I think, from a profound and unaffected indifference to the state of their mental furniture and possessions. Indeed, among the many marvellous phenomena pertaining to humanity, not the least, in my opinion, is this almost incredible facility of belief. We find men, not only the ignorant and untrained, but those possessed of a considerable amount of culture, continually accepting without question, and pronouncing without hesitation, opinions on the most important subjects; thus manifesting as to the number, quality, &c., of their most sacred convictions, a recklessness and indifference bordering on contempt. As an inevitable result, the minds of most men are full of irreconcilable and undigested notions and beliefs, resembling a 'Happy Family Cage,' in which animals, which naturally cherish the most violent antipathy to each other, are compelled to dwell in a kind of hollow and unreal peace.[2] The objection has been made

[1] Cf. Madame de Vaudeul: *Mémoires*. 'Il reçut le soir ses amis; la conversation s'engagea sur la philosophie et les différentes routes pour arriver à cette science; le premier pas, dit-il, vers la philosophie, c'est incrédulité. Ce mot est le dernier qu'il ait proféré devant moi.' *Œuv. Comp. de Diderot*, édition Garnier Frères, i. p. lvii. May it not be said of this *first step* also, 'Il n'y a que le premier pas qui coûte?' Menagius refers the proverb to Aristotle, 'Αρχὴ τῆς σοφίας ἀπιστία. *Menagiana*, p. 285.

[2] Persons accustomed to psychological introspection must have frequently observed how long, even in matters of common life, an indistinct consciousness of error may exist in a semi-dormant state in the mind, until some day the truth suddenly flashes on us, or is forcibly suggested by fuller information from without. Miss Martineau's *Autobiography* gives an interesting example of this phenomenon:—'It seems to me now that I seldom asked questions in those days. I went on for years together, in a puzzle for want of its ever occurring to me to ask questions. For instance: no

to Wolf's cause of Skepticism, that the man who should refrain from pronouncing an opinion on obvious subjects from fear of error, would be acting as wisely as a dyspeptic who should starve himself from fear of indigestion; but the answer to the objection is easy, and is, indeed, implied in the estimate I have just propounded of the mental condition of the bulk of mankind. In other words, mental or intellectual indigestion is a disease not, perhaps, impossible, but of the rarest possible kind. For even when attention is called to the fact that within the compass of a single human mind, the lion is, metaphorically speaking, lying down with the lamb, and the bear with the calf, no sense of alarm is excited by the incongruous companionship; no intellectual nausea or feeling of disagreement is created by the close juxtaposition of such different and conflicting elements. And yet, for the interests of humanity, it is perhaps as well that mental dyspepsia should be so very rare; for imagination recoils before the contemplation of the terrible consequences which would ensue, supposing the effects of receiving crude and incompatible notions into the mind were as distinctly baneful to its own health, as the reception into the body of incongruous and indigestible food is prejudicial to its welfare.[1]

There is, however, a certain type of intellect which regards belief and its voluntary attestation as a matter of the gravest import. Men of this kind not only submit every new article of faith to the most rigorous examination, but they extend the same treatment, so far as possible (due allowance being made for the many subtle disguises which mental ideas are able to assume), to their accumulated stock of convictions and beliefs as well. To every

accounts of a spring-gun answered to my conception of it—that it was a pea-green musket used only in spring. This absurdity lay by unnoticed in my mind till I was twenty. At that age I was staying at Birmingham, and we were returning from a country walk in the dusk of the evening when my host warned us not to cross a little wood for fear of spring-guns, and showed us the wire of one. I was truly confounded when the sense of the old mistake, dormant in my mind till now, came upon me.' (Vol. i. p. 31.) It is needless to add that the vitality, at least pertinacity, of these half-latent, half-conscious errors, is greater in proportion to their affinity with authority; especially in things beyond the scope of immediate verification.

[1] On the subject of this paragraph see some valuable remarks in Ritter's *Philosophische Paradoxa*, p. 220, &c. The mutual antagonism of the different contents of the mind he regards as the origin and justification of Skepticism, by reconciling which the mind progresses through doubt to certainty. He, however, implies that this reconciliation can never be quite complete, so that knowledge must always exist *between* Skepticism and Dogmatism—suspended, like Mahomet's coffin, between earth and heaven.

demand for assent, no matter whence its alleged source, such men instinctively oppose an attitude of mental hesitation. Are they to commit themselves, they immediately ask, by their own voluntary act, to definitive conclusions which subsequent consideration may perhaps fail to verify? No prudent man likes to put his hand to a paper which may, possibly, in after time compromise him, monetarily or otherwise. But, in every case where a man deliberately records his full and undoubting belief in a given dogma, he is, so to speak, putting his hand to his own intellectual 'will and testament' on that specific point.[1] He delivers his creed or conviction as 'his own act and deed.' It may easily happen, among the numberless uncertainties in which most truths are enveloped—and, especially, if his intellect be of the highest type, *i.e.* capable of growth—that a few more years of inquiry may fail to establish satisfactorily the truth on which he has so confidently pronounced; nay, more, he may even discover that, so far from having strong arguments in its favour, most of the ratiocination on the subject seems to his maturer and more balanced intellect to militate directly against it. What is the unfortunate man to do? Honestly, he can do nothing less than retract; and retractation is not a pleasant process either for the individual himself or for those who witness it. We can, then, understand the extreme caution which characterises not a few susceptible minds on this important point. Hesitation and doubt appear to them positions of much less danger than rash and immature assent. This state of uncertainty may be irksome to those who feel compelled to maintain it—it certainly involves an amount of prejudice and suspicion which only the strongest minds are able to encounter. Still their fear of possible error; their dread of affirming deliberately and definitively what a more enlarged knowledge might discover to be false; their philosophical reluctance to sacrifice future investigation to the more pressing needs (which are, after all, only assumed) of the moment; their intense and, perhaps, morbidly acute feeling on the subject of Truth; their full conviction of her sacred, inviolable, and eternal nature; all these considerations induce

[1] Compare the neat epigram of Audoenus (*Epig.* iv. 222):

'Heu quantum in terris dominatur opinio! verum
Nec nescire putas, et dubitare vetas.
Qui dubitat non errat, adhuc in utrumque paratus
Error opinando, nec dubitando venit.'

So Quinctilian speaks of dogmatists, 'qui velut sacramento rogati, vel etiam superstitione constricti, nefas ducunt a susceptâ semel persuasione discedere.'—*Inst. Or.* xii chap. 2.

them to prefer the hesitation they know to be real to the ill-founded certainty they feel may be false. It would, in my judgment, be a mistake to suppose that such persons—or, for that matter, any real, sincere Skeptics—*willingly* prefer an attitude of suspense to that of undoubting conviction; but they know the inconveniences entailed by the former position, whereas they are unaware of the mischief which would result from the hasty adoption of unverified conclusions. Their feeling might, perhaps, be expressed by the familiar quotation that it is better to

> Bear those ills they have,
> Than fly to others that they know not of.

As an interesting example of the state of mind induced by the special influences I am now considering, I may point to the case of Arthur Hugh Clough, of whom his biographer tells us:[1]—'His scepticism was of no mere negative quality, . . . but was the expression of a pure reverence for the inner light of the spirit, and of entire submission to its guidance. It was the loyalty to truth as the supreme good of the intellect, and as the only sure foundation of moral character.' To most people who have never reflected on Skepticism, and who share the ordinary prejudices on the subject, this position of Clough's, which might easily be paralleled from our projected gallery of Skeptics, would no doubt appear highly paradoxical. Misled by the calumnies and imputations which dogmatists of all classes and creeds have lavished upon non-believers, they are accustomed to suppose that all Skepticism necessarily implies an intentional hostility to truth, and are hence unable to conceive how it can, and often does, originate in a diametrically opposite feeling; *i.e.* in a profound veneration for truth, and a sensitive dread of the smallest approach to error. Nothing can better illustrate the cruel tyranny which dogmatism has in all ages attempted to exercise than the fact that such a position as that we have now investigated should be held up for the contempt and execration of mankind, and should be deemed a reason for consigning men, who were actually gifted with a keener sense of truth than their neighbours, to a martyr's death.

VI. One more general cause I notice in deference to a widespread belief that it is largely operative in the production of Skepticism—I mean the desire of novelty. Of course this is often only the kind of reproach which 'Conservatives' in philosophy, as in politics, are wont to hurl at their 'Radical' adversaries, and, so

[1] See *Life and Letters*. vol. i. p. 15.

far, might have been passed over by us; but as the same reproach is made by others, who are not unfriendly to philosophical Skepticism, it may be worth our considering on what grounds it is based, and how far it is justified. Now, in determining the value of this feeling as a motive for Skepticism, we must remember that it holds true of intellectual as of physical nosology, that the self-same symptoms occasionally betoken both an excess and a defect of functional activity. They may express either debility or exuberance of power. Hence we must discriminate between cases in which the desire for novelty is the fruit of inordinate vanity,[1] and constitutes the sole or main reason for the adoption of any belief, and others in which it is an essential characteristic of an original and independent intellect. It is chiefly in the latter sense that I accept it as a contributory and occasional incentive to Skepticism; but so far from regarding it as blameworthy, I consider it not only justifiable, but an absolutely necessary ingredient in every genuine philosopher. For a very small acquaintance with the history of civilisation and human progress is sufficient to prove how much the desire for novelty in inventions and scientific researches, the wish to add a single new item to the sum of human knowledge, has effected for mankind; not to mention the kindred thirst for change, the reformation of old abuses in religion and politics, which has contributed so materially to human civilisation and advancement. That there are instances among recognised Skeptics in which the feeling in its perverted form as a mere passion for eccentricity may be discovered, I have no wish to deny; —we shall, in the course of our researches, have opportunities of studying more than one example of it—though even in this case I would willingly urge as pleas for mitigation of judgment, the probability that, like ambition, it may be 'the last infirmity of noble minds;' and the difficulty of adjusting precisely the boundary line where the praiseworthy quality we call originality passes into the obnoxious passion which we term love of novelty. All I contend for at present is, that this much-abused feeling is in its truest aspect pure, generous, and unselfish; that it is a necessary element in every great enterprise, and in most characters. Whereas—

[1] Such cases, *e.g.*, as the 'self-conceited man' of Bp. Earle's *Microcosmography*:—'His tenent,' says the bishop, 'is always singular and aloof from the vulgar as he can, from which you must not hope to wrest him. He has an excellent humour for an heretick, and in these days made the first Arminian. He prefers Ramus before Aristotle, and Paracelsus before Galen,and whosoever with most paradox is commended.'—*Microcosmography*, Bliss's Ed. p. 32.

and here I pack into one sentence what has filled many a learned tome—few things have more contributed to the retardation and hindrance of human progress and civilisation than the opposite feeling to that we are discussing, *i.e.* the dread of novelty.

I have thus enumerated most of the predisposing causes of Skepticism, so far as they are, or may be, general; leaving those that are special and personal to be considered when we come to treat of particular Skeptics. I have, as you have doubtless noticed, avowedly taken up the defence of extreme Skepticism, not only as being theoretically my own position, but because I deem it right, in the examination of any intellectual tendency, to urge everything that can fairly be said in its defence. No other course seems to me either philosophical or ingenuous. I am well aware of the browbeating to which Skepticism, in common with other suspected modes of thought, has been compelled to submit from its enemies—like a dangerous witness in the hands of an unscrupulous advocate; but from a select circle of philosophers, as I trust we may, without vanity, assume ourselves to be, there is little danger of any other than a strictly impartial and respectful treatment. Our position in our proposed *séances* is this:—Given a certain mode of thought, underlying, to a greater or less extent, all philosophy, theology, ethics, and physical science, and, occasionally, in particular persons and epochs, assuming a bold and aggressive attitude, what can fairly be urged in its behalf by its most uncompromising defenders? Such is the question I have tried to answer generally in this essay, and to which a more particular and detailed reply will be afforded by our coming researches. Such, also, is the spirit in which it appears to me our subject should be approached; for we must never forget that Skepticism, like every other natural tendency of the intellect, requires an intelligent and sympathetic treatment. Indeed, it has a right to this, even from the hostile point of view which regards it as an eccentricity; for in these days, when humane and improved methods of investigation are applied to all forms of mental disease, it seems unjust to exclude the aberrations of the philosopher from kindly and judicious treatment. Deviations from conventional beliefs have, intrinsically, as much claim as those from ordinary human practice to be treated as natural phenomena, and made the object of careful psychical investigation. Those who approach our Skeptics in this scientific and considerate spirit may find much in them to reprehend; but they will also find much to extenuate, much to compassionate, and, what cannot be said of ordinary types of mental disease, much that seems deserving of

commendation and imitation on the part of every thinking man.

. . . . . .

ARUNDEL. Thanks, Doctor, for your very elaborate Essay, in which, I should be inclined to say, as Leibnitz said of Hobbes that he was '*plusquam nominalis*,' you have amply approved yourself to be *plusquam Skepticus*. But, candidly, your argument appears to me to prove too much; for, if the constitution of the universe, the nature of human faculties—not to mention your other causes—all tend to and involve Skepticism, instead of Skeptics being, as you admit they are, in an enormous minority, they ought to be in an overwhelming majority; nay, it is doubtful whether, under your hypothesis, such a weak, inconsistent being as a dogmatist has any right at all to exist.

TREVOR. I might answer your objection by referring to Thucydides, who, as you know, says that 'Search for truth is intolerable to most people, and they prefer accepting ready-made opinions;' with which you may take the well-known proverb that 'Opinion rules the world,' and as Aristotle tells us, 'Opinion is not search, but assertion.' That the many are dogmatists no more proves the necessity or expediency of such an arrangement than the fact that the inhabitants of the earth are 'mostly fools' proves a providential leaning towards folly. Both wisdom and Skepticism have always been in a deplorable minority. I will not insist upon the conclusion thence derivable in respect of their possible identity, though Pascal maintains that Pyrrhonism derives its strength and justification from the fact of its possessing so many enemies. I will only say that the verdict of the majority which is adverse to the one is equally adverse to the other. A clergyman ought, I think, to be the last man in the world to insist on the argument of the '*Vox populi*' being equivalent to the '*Vox Dei*' or '*Vox veritatis*.'

'Rien ne fortifie plus le Pyrrhonisme que ce qu'il y en a qui ne sont point Pyrrhoniens: si tous l'étaient, ils auroient tort— Cette secte se fortifie par ses ennemis plus que par ses amis.' *Pensées*. Ed. Havet. vol. i. p. 30.

MISS LEYCESTER. Besides, Mr. Arundel, we must remember what the Doctor told us as to the existence in most men's minds of contradictory opinions and belief, and the rarity of intellectual dyspepsia. I own I was much struck with that part of the Essay. The infinite diversity of human minds, the miscellaneous nature of their contents, and the easy slip-shod way in which opinions are popularly accepted, have always appeared to me matters of great interest. In itself, the fact of such diversity may be said to be in harmony with the constitution of the physical world and the spontaneous tendency to variation therein manifested. I wonder, by the way, if Herbert Spencer's 'Instability of the Homogeneous' could be applied to the human intellect (at least of the Skeptical type), so that at the very moment when a man had reduced all his beliefs and conceptions into consistency and harmony, a new attempt at differentiation should spontaneously result.

HARRINGTON. According to Dr. Trevor's paper, it is but rarely that the 'instability' in men's minds has the 'homogeneous' to operate upon. No doubt there are intellects as instinctively impatient of homogeneousness, in the sense of fixed beliefs, as the most sensitive of chemical or organic compounds can possibly be in their own respective provinces; but that all intellects are so constituted is a proposition which I should be loth to accept, as it would make Skepticism the normal condition of the mind. As a matter of practical life rather than of speculation, I think a transference of the majority from dogmatists to Skeptics, even if possible, were greatly to be deprecated. I grant that much more inquiry and, if need be, of wholesome uncertainty than at present exists would be beneficial to intellectual progress; but it seems to me that the instincts of Skepticism, when pushed to extremes, are repugnant to law, order, and good government. The excess of individuality, for instance, which it tends to promote would be fatal to the easy and quiet working of all our social systems. Of course, we may easily have too much of mere stolid acquiescence; but as long as human nature is what we find it to be, men will prefer the repose of a feather-bed to the tortures of the rack. I was

about, when Florence turned the current of my thoughts, to offer a criticism, on this very point, of what I take to be the lawlessness of unbounded Skepticism. That the human mind is limited, we must all admit; but, instead of attempting the impossible task of surmounting these obstacles, of trying like the dove in Kant's simile to transcend the atmosphere in which we float, might it not be advisable to remember that, under *any conceivable hypothesis*, such obstacles must exist, and the fact that real liberty is only found within the due limits of law? Remember Goethe:—

> Vergebens werden ungebundene Geister
> Nach der Vollendung reiner Höhe streben,
> In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister
> Und das Gesetz nur kann uns Freiheit geben.

TREVOR. Let every man roam in such a '*Beschränkung*' as Goethe marked out for his own movements, and I, for my part, will never more urge the need of further intellectual liberty. But you must do me the justice to remember that I did not—indeed, I could not—deny the limitations of the human faculties; all I wanted to show was the tendency of the mind, in certain stages of its development, to ignore those limitations, and vainly endeavour to surmount them. I look on these efforts as inherent in its very nature, and only partially controlled by subsequent experience of their futility. The questions of children, *e.g.* as to objects about them are much more profound and penetrating than the inquiries of grown people. The child's fearlessly inquisitive nature points to the original tendencies of its faculties; the man's more cautious and restrained investigations prove their repression by experience. As to your 'feather-bed *v.* rack' illustration, I must remind you that it is Skeptics that claim the feather-bed as a welcome escape from the rack-tortures of the many conflicting beliefs and systems of dogmatism. This is the meaning of the *Ataraxia* or impassive calm which the Pyrrhonists claimed as the necessary outcome of their Skepticism; and Montaigne only puts this into his own quaint humour, when he exclaims: '*Oh*, what a soft, easy, and healthy pillow is ignorance and incuriosity for the repose of a well-formed head!'

ARUNDEL. There is another remark which I should like to make on a part of your argument in which you appeared to me to push your principles to a suicidal extreme. You represented the coercive force of our sensations, together with the confirmatory evidence derived from others, in the light of a despotic tyranny, serving not to train but to cramp the faculties (though you did not tell us what senses without sensations could possibly mean). But by so doing you admitted, in my opinion, that dogmatism has so far a stand-point and a *raison d'être*. Some years ago I picked up, at a second-hand bookstall, a small German work called 'Pyrrho and Philalethes,'[1] and I was much struck with an illustration of the author's as to the force of this consensus. He supposed a number of men to have seen for the first time, the *Ornithorhynchus paradoxus*, and he points out the effect upon their minds, under circumstances so favourable to incredulity, of the combined influences of their own actual sensations and the consentient testimony of their fellow-observers, and dwells upon the substantial agreement as to the abnormal phenomena which would be produced in the minds of all; whence he ultimately deduces the similarity of human organisations, both physical and mental, and the irresistibly compelling power of external objects when brought into contact with them. This 'consensus,' or 'common sense,' which is the real foundation of dogmatism, seems to me to fall short very little, if at all, of absolute certainty, and therefore must, in my opinion, be always victorious over extreme idealism and rampant Skepticism.

TREVOR. Your position as to the worth of 'common sense' is different from Harrington's. You, like all dogmatists, want to make it the foundation for systematic belief, although I think you cannot help acknowledging that the superstructures laid upon it are often disproportionately great. Harrington, if I understand him rightly, regards it as a kind of common nexus, useful for binding men to each other, or as a kind of oil tending to prevent friction in the working

[1] *Pyrrho und Philalethes, oder Leitet die Scepsis zur Wahrheit und zur ruhigen Entscheidung?* Herausgegeben von D. Franz Volkmar Reinhard. Salzbach, 1812.

of our social machinery. Now, I am not disposed to deny the existence of this power or its value as a lubricating agent. All I question is, its claim to be considered a sufficient foundation for dogmatic belief in the sense of absolute demonstration. Extreme Sceptics, like Sextos Empeirikos himself, never denied the evidence of their senses, or the despotic power of phenomena *as such*. What they protest against is making the impressions of one or more individuals tests of unconditional certainty. Had a modern disciple of Sextos been among the jury assembled round the ornithorhynchus, his verdict would probably have been something of this kind:—'I agree with you that this is a wondrously strange animal—a compound of bird, beast, and fish; and I admit that your evidence respecting it agrees with my own conclusions; nevertheless, we must not attribute, even to our collective judgment, an infallibility which it cannot possess. What we observe of the animal constitutes but a small part of the knowledge we might conceive ourselves to possess about it—at least, what the thing is in itself we can never know. We might term it (as Leibnitz termed matter) a "well-founded phenomenon," and our united conclusions respecting it have a high degree of probability; but that our observations are to be accepted as so absolutely certain that they cannot be vitiated by the least possibility of a mistake or imperfection of any kind, is a proposition I am unable to accept.'

Of course, in the last resort, the sole judge of truth must under every circumstance be a man's own faculties; and the confirmatory witness of others, even when attainable, is by nó means universally reliable. To a man, *e.g.* afflicted with colour-blindness no amount of external testimony would prove that the colour he saw was not what he supposed it to be, and in my profession we have the utmost difficulty in making people accept the evidence of the clinical thermometer and such scientific tests as against their own sensations. Moreover, looking at the question from a still broader point of view, there is hardly any doctrine of theology, philosophy, or science so false and perverted that it cannot count its adherents by scores and perhaps hundreds; and here we again touch the question of the right of the majority

to coerce a minority on a subject of speculation and belief.

MRS. HARRINGTON. If I may be permitted a small criticism on Dr. Trevor's glorification of Skepticism, I should like to point out how all the great leaders of human thought—those who have originated new movements in religion, and, so far as I know, in philosophy as well—have not only not been Skeptics, but have been removed by the greatest possible distance from Skepticism. They were not only dogmatic, but indomitably and passionately so. It was this intensity of personal conviction that gave them their enormous power over their fellow-men, and enabled them to produce the profound impression they have left on the page of history. Indeed, I cannot myself conceive the possibility of a man, who has no strong fervent convictions of his own, carrying out any great enterprise, or being accepted as a leader by his fellows. In all the great concerns of life men desiderate a vigorous grasp of principles and a stern determination to put them into action.

TREVOR. Perhaps, Mrs. Harrington, you will give us a few examples of such dogmatists.

MRS. HARRINGTON. I was thinking at the moment of some of the great leaders of religious thought: such men, for instance, as Loyola, Calvin, Luther, and Wesley.

TREVOR. I fear I must take exception *in limine* to your first two instances. Their religious fervour I readily grant, but that its exercise or the influence thereby acquired has been uniformly beneficial to humanity I emphatically deny. Loyola I take to have been a religious fanatic who combined the unprincipled astuteness of a Machiavelli with the superstitious piety of a St. Dominic. He was the founder of a system which has more than any other outcome of Romanism retarded the cause of progress and freedom. Calvin, whom a friend of mine calls 'the grand inquisitor of Protestants,' has bequeathed to humanity two legacies: the atrocious martyrdom of poor Servetus; and a religious system, which, if it has pretensions to logical coherence, has none to justice, mercy, or common sense. Whatever benefits he has exercised on Christianity have been purely accidental, and must

be ascribed to the fact that men are often better than their creeds, and human instincts stronger than speculative dogmas. Wesley's influence, though in many respects beneficial, is not without a considerable alloy of narrow-mindedness and hierarchical ambition, and does not deserve, in my estimation, a high rank among civilising and enlightening agencies. With regard to Luther, I take it that his best work was of a Skeptical, or, at least, a solvent and destructive character. He created infinitely more doubts than convictions, and made more disbelievers in Romanism than converts to Lutheranism. I should, therefore, without much hesitation class him with other illustrious leaders of men, in whose intellectual composition a pretty large percentage of Skepticism is clearly traceable. Hence, in opposition to Mrs. Harrington—whose theory is, however, based on a widely-extended prepossession—I should say that the most eminent names on the rolls of science, philosophy, and religion are names of men who have possessed the faculties of critical insight and consequent incredulity in a large measure. Indeed, it seems to me that the fountain of human reason, like the pool of Bethesda, must first be disturbed by some heaven-sent messenger, before it can fully exercise its curative and miraculous properties. Take such men, *e.g.* as Sokrates, Descartes, Galileo, Giordano Bruno, Locke, Hume, Kant, and Mill, and you will find that whatever systematic convictions they ultimately became possessed of were based on methods essentially Skeptical. Nor in the majority of these cases was the Skeptical stage merely temporary and preparatory; but throughout their whole intellectual career, doubt trod on the heels of certainty:—to use the expressive simile which Sextos employs to denote the connection of Ataraxia to suspense,—'as the shadow cleaves to its substance'—a function, I may add, which it is the beneficent prerogative of doubt to discharge, not merely in individual cases, but in the history of philosophy and progressive science as a whole. I would further remark that the religion which of all others has most swayed the hearts and intellects of civilised men owes, humanly speaking, a large measure of its success to the undogmatising character and

work of its founder. The dogmatic teaching of Jesus Christ was mainly ethical and unspeculative, and *ipso facto* imperfectly dogmatic; and it is to this freedom and flexibility in its original structure, as regards purely theological or speculative beliefs, that I attribute much of its early success. Had the prophet of Nazareth, for example, deliberately enunciated some such confession as the Nicene Creed to the Galilæan peasantry, instead of the Sermon on the Mount, Christianity would have been strangled by dogma in its cradle.

HARRINGTON. With much of what you have said, I fully agree. But, if you will excuse my saying so, there seems a tendency to sophistical reasoning in your remarks on Luther. A man is not a Skeptic in the true sense of the term, who changes his dogmatic system. The Protestant Luther was in point of fact much more dogmatic than the Augustinian monk. The area of his beliefs was narrowed, but the greater intensity of his new convictions more than compensated for such circumscription. There ought, I think, to be some method of assessing the total amount of a man's faith qualitatively as well as quantitatively; for it is evident that one man may expend as much or even more energy on a few dogmas than another will distribute to a larger number; the concentration of intellectual force inevitably adding to its vigour and intensity. Hence we find, as a rule, that the narrower any man's creed, the greater is the tenacity with which he cleaves to it; just as a river runs with greater vehemence when confined by high banks than when it is spread out over level margins and a flat country.

MISS LEYCESTER. What we want, and what some inventor, in the remote future, may be able to supply, is a *Pistometer* or faith-measurer, with a duly graduated scale from the '*zero*' of Nihilism or utter Skepticism to the 'boiling point' of extreme credulity and superstition. Such an instrument, if we could only get it, would be most useful for our present researches; for we might then determine in degrees, minutes, and seconds that approximation to *zero* which would constitute a title to our gallery of Skeptics.

TREVOR. Even then, Miss Leycester, we should have to take frequent observations and strike an average before we

could obtain any reliable result. Not even the barometer, in our own fickle climate, would show a greater number of changes than such a pistometer would indicate in the great majority of cases to which it was applied; and were these variations committed to paper, like the lines in a meteorological diagram, their zig-zaggedness would, I have no doubt, startle some people who have never studied the winds, tides, and general fluctuations which characterise so many human intellects—especially of the restless, inquiring kind. As to Harrington's remark about Luther, I quite concede that his dogmatism after the final 'set' or determination of his creed was more intense than ever before. But, meanwhile, the undermining of his old faith was accomplished by agencies which I should call Skeptical; and what I wanted to point out was that these influences, though their action was only temporary in his own case, produced probably a greater general effect on the world at large than the strong dogmatism by which they were succeeded.

MRS. HARRINGTON. But how do you account for the ill-fame which has always been awarded to Skeptics, and for the undoubted fact that, as Rousseau said, 'men will rather be willingly deceived than believe nothing at all'?[1]

TREVOR. More than one reason might be assigned for the supposed ill-repute of Skepticism. 1. Human nature as a whole has, as Bacon puts it, a stronger leaning to affirmations than to negations, though he stigmatises such a partiality as unjust.[2] 2. Every majority agrees in ascribing ill-motives to the minority. 3. Skepticism, like treason, is only in disfavour as long as it is unsuccessful; when it achieves its object, its name is changed. Hence successful Skepticism is reformation. You remember Sir John Harrington's couplet:—

[1] Le doute sur les choses qu'il importe de connaître est un état trop violent pour l'esprit humain; il n'y résiste pas long-temps, il se décide malgré lui d'une manière ou d'autre, et il aime mieux se tromper que ne rien croire. (Rousseau, *Emile*, liv. iv. p. 311.) Cf. G. C. Lewis's *Influence of Authority in Matters of Opinion*, p. 10.

[2] 'Natura intellectûs humani magis afficitur affirmativis et activis quam negativis et privativis, cum rite et ordine æquum se utrique præbere debeat. *De Aug. Sci.* v. chap. 4. *Works*, Ellis and Spedding, i. p. 643.

> Treason doth never prosper. What's the reason?
> For if it prosper, none dare call it treason.

Only a few decades ago, disbelief in such things as witchcraft was stigmatised as Skepticism. But, for my own part, I do not believe that in the unconscious common sense of the world at large, which occasionally overrides popular opinion, and which expresses itself by epigrams, proverbs, and satirical innuendos, rather than in formal declarations and creeds, Skepticism does occupy such an inferior position as is commonly supposed. For one proverb or epigram against Skeptics, I would undertake to produce six against opinionists. I have made a collection of a few of these gems, which you might like to look at—beginning with the severe apophthegm ascribed to Theognis, 'Opinion is to men a great evil,' and ending with the definition of *Dog*-matism, as wise as it is witty, of Douglas Jerrold, '*Puppy*-ism full grown.' Moreover, we have in most modern languages the same disdain of overbearing dogmatism expressed by such words as 'opinionated' or 'opiniâtreté,' 'conceited,' 'eigensinnig,' &c. &c.

As to Rousseau's assertion, it can only be accepted with considerable qualification. I am fully aware that men will sometimes hold, in a kind of half acceptance, beliefs which are not the genuine convictions of their reason, but the suggestions of their profit or interest. I also recognise that strange power which some men have of coercing, and, if need be, of fully suppressing, the dictates of their reason. But such cases appear to me exceptional. I am unable to conceive how a man, at once honest and intellectual, would rather believe what was false than remain in suspense. In other cases voluntary self-deception is easy enough, *Si vult decipi, decipiatur.*

HARRINGTON. You have a remarkable instance of the subordination of (supposed) genuine conviction to the impulses of affection in Cicero's well-known preference, '*Mallem cum Platone errare, quam cum istis recte sentire.*' I confess nothing fills me with greater despair for the interests of truth and the welfare of humanity than to observe the readiness with which gifted men sacrifice, so far

as we can judge, their highest faculties and endowments at the shrine of personal advantage or ambition.

MISS LEYCESTER. I am afraid, Dr. Trevor, that you have misunderstood the quotation from Rousseau. It is the possibility of *ultimate deception* that he puts in opposition to complete negation, not the conscious believing what is false. He is speaking of beliefs which are important. Take as an illustration belief in the existence of Deity. Although such an existence be not absolutely demonstrable, yet the majority of the human race would infinitely prefer to accept such an important belief—even with the bare possibility of being mistaken—than to have no belief at all on such a momentous subject. That, I think, is Rousseau's meaning.

TREVOR. In that case I don't think that his dictum much concerns us. A belief that is adopted merely as a *pis-aller*, to escape a worse alternative, can never assume consistently or rightly a very dogmatic character.

ARUNDEL. I presume, Doctor, we may charge you with indulging in a little irony—though the notion, I am aware, is not uncommon among Skeptics—in that part of your Essay in which you maintained that the best cure for Skepticism was mere ignorance. You are the last man in the world to put forth in sober earnest a plea for irrationality.

TREVOR. I assure you I was never more in earnest in my life.

ARUNDEL. But do you really affirm, as your deliberate opinion, that men would be better satisfied and not so Skeptical by knowing less rather than more? Take, *e.g.* Newton's great discovery of the law of gravitation. Do you mean to say that this has not benefited and satisfied mankind, making clear what was before obscure, and bringing such various and complicated processes and phenomena under the dominion of an immutable law?

TREVOR. Undoubtedly it is my deliberate conviction that inquiry and Skepticism tend to increase in a direct ratio with knowledge, and I think that the converse of this rule is equally true; I am, of course, far from wishing humanity to relapse into barbarism. Our divine inheritance is light and knowledge; and if such light must by immut-

able law have its attendant shadow, if knowledge gives rise to an appetite whose craving it cannot appease, we must, I will not say be content, but we must rejoice in an heritage belonging to beings whose capacities and powers, great as they are, are in aspiration and imagination incomparably greater than any conceivable method or material by which they can be satisfied. In the part of my paper to which you refer, I was considering the prevention or cure of Skepticism from the standpoint of those who regard it as an evil. For myself, as I have just hinted, so far from looking at it as an evil, I conceive it may have, and be providentially intended to have, a much larger proportion of good than of evil, of benefit than of injury, of joy than of sorrow.[1] But conceive Skepticism from the common point of view, as a defect to be remedied; which to most dogmatists would seem the lesser of the two evils, unbelief or ignorance? I have no doubt they would agree with me (reasoning for the time from their point of view), and reply—ignorance. Moreover, that this voluntary limitation of knowledge and inquiry is the popular antidote to Skepticism is shown by the advice of zealous dogma propagandists, who do not scruple to recommend, in cases when ignorance is not a native product, an artificial preparation of the remedy; their advice to doubters being, as a rule, 'Shut your eyes,' 'cease to inquire,' &c. &c.—the climax of which tendency is contained in Tertullian's extravagant dictum 'credo quia impossibile;' a declaration, by the way, which I fear is still the primary article of faith with many religious enthusiasts. Clough has described this idea of 'duty,' as it is curiously called, very neatly:—

> Duty?—'tis to take on trust
> What things are good, and right, and just;
> And whether, indeed, they be or be not,
> Try not, test not, feel not, see not.
> 'Tis walk and dance, sit down and rise
> By leading, opening ne'er your eyes.

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[1] For some thoughtful remarks on the nature and use of Skepticism, see Hinton's *Man and his Dwelling-place*, book ii. chap. iv.

Stunt sturdy limbs that nature gave,
And be drawn in a Bath-chair along to the grave.
'Tis the stern and prompt suppressing,
As an obvious deadly sin,
All the questing and the guessing
Of the soul's own soul within.[1]

Besides, I had another object in that portion of my paper; I wished to show the fallacy of the widespread belief that Skepticism may be cured by an increase of our knowledge, or of the extent or power of the faculties by which we attain it. As to your illustration, Arundel, of the benefits which have accrued to mankind from the discovery of gravitation, I have no wish to call them in question; but if you include in your enumeration of such benefits the complete satisfaction of the speculative intellect—and that is the point in question—then I must profess my inability to agree with you. Newton's discovery no doubt enables us to co-ordinate and arrange a number of facts and phenomena, and thereby to predict others; but that it affords a sufficing answer to even moderate inquiry, I emphatically deny. Before the discovery the human intellect stood face to face with a number of phenomena, the order and regularity of which it had succeeded in dimly apprehending. Since the discovery we have, instead of the phenomena, a law, as it is called, whose operations we are able to formulate in certain well-known ratios, but which is, in its nature and mode of operation, as inscrutable and mysterious as we can conceive anything to be. What then, I would ask, has the discovery effected as a complete satisfaction of the intellect, and thereby as an antidote to Skepticism? It has but removed the difficulty one stage farther off, and in so doing, has, by introducing other collateral problems which the mere contemplation of the phenomena would never have suggested, really added to the difficulties of the question to be solved.

MISS LEYCESTER. But in your enumeration of the different causes of Skepticism you have apparently confined yourself to those that are plainly intellectual. Now a good deal of the modern unrest which is allied with Skepticism

[1] *Poems*, p. 183.

seems to be derived from emotional or sentimental causes—ill-regulated passions, excesses of various kinds, listlessness and *ennui*, dissatisfaction with existence, and a consequent distrust of its teachings, apparently for no better reason than that it exists; such a state, *e.g.* as was represented by Werther and Wertherism in Germany, and in France by such writers as Alfred de Musset, Lamartine, &c.

TREVOR. The omission was purposely made. I fully acknowledge that the kind of Skepticism you speak of exercised a most potent and unhealthy influence in Germany, France, and England at the close of the last and commencement of the present century. Traces of it may, I have no doubt, be found in each of those countries, especially in the two former. But, to tell you the truth, I did not think it deserving a place by the side of intellectual causes. That there are puzzles in the universe which the human intellect cannot solve is an intelligible proposition, and it is one compatible with the noblest and most untiring search after truth; but that men worthy of the name should, in an access of petty childish passion, oppose themselves to the obvious laws and experience of the world, seems precisely like the act of a petulant child who beats the inanimate object that has hurt it. I should, therefore, draw a distinct line of demarcation between intellectual and sentimental Skeptics, and should refuse to consider the latter as worthy of our attention. The Abbé de Baunard, in his tolerant and sympathetic work, 'Les Victimes du Doute,' has made a division between Skeptics in philosophy and poetry, or between those of thought and of life. Our own proposed distinction between intellectual and sentimental Skeptics seems to me preferable; though so intimate is the cohesion between the reason and the feelings that we shall find it impossible always to eliminate the latter as secondary agencies in the production of Skepticism.

MISS LEYCESTER. It is a remarkable instance of Goethe's versatility, that the two creations which in modern times best typify the emotional and intellectual Skeptic, Werther and Faust, are his.

HARRINGTON. As to Faust, let Goethe have all the glory

you can lavish on him. He is the eternal type of the eager, curious questioner and doubter. But, with regard to the creation of Werther, I agree with Trevor, and with a much greater thinker than either of us—I mean Lessing—it is almost beneath contempt. He is the most despicable being that ever a gigantic genius set itself to excogitate. The only satisfactory part of his maudlin career is his suicide, of which I should say that no act of his life became him like leaving it. Existence has surely trials enough, even for wise men, without adding to them the imaginary sorrows, the mawkish sentimentality, of brainless fools.

MISS LEYCESTER. I cannot say I have the least respect for Werther; still I think you are too severe on him and the class he represents. Even allowing that his mental distractions, his antagonism to human experience and social laws, were caused by disordered passions, yet the passions as much as the intellect form part of a man, and certainly are not inferior to it as incentives to action as well as to belief. A conspectus of human motives to thought and action which should altogether omit the passions would seem, therefore, to be partial and inadequate. Besides, we must not forget the numberless beauties which 'Werther' contains, independently of its plot-interest.

TREVOR. Mere accessories, Miss Leycester, of an unworthy and repellent subject. It would have been impossible for a man like Goethe to have treated any subject without leaving on it the marks of his own creative and artistic genius. As Stella said of Swift, 'He could have written beautifully about a broomstick;' but in the case of Werther these embellishments are like an elaborate flower decoration of a ghastly corpse. No matter how skilfully it is effected, nothing can disguise the livid pallor of death, or conceal the incipient traces of corruption.

ARUNDEL. I doubt whether Goethe intended Werther to be regarded as a type or victim of Skepticism; at least the creation on his part of a separate personage to represent the restlessness which comes of human passion is altogether unnecessary, for Faust represents, not only intellectual unbelief, but also the unrest begotten of passion and desire as

well. It is, in my humble opinion, a mark of Goethe's genius —of the full all-roundedness of his character—that he should have united the intellectual and emotional disquiet in a single personality, instead of making Faust an intellectual machine without body, parts, or passions.

TREVOR. Though I know that in doing so I shall avow myself a heretic, I entirely dissent from your view of Faust as a perfect artistic representation of intellectual unbelief. There is too much alloy of human passion in his composition. I am quite unable to conceive that a man of his mental power, independence, and knowledge should have surrendered himself to sensuous enjoyments as an escape from the puzzles of existence.

MISS LEYCESTER. What, Faust without Gretschen! Oh, Dr. Trevor!

TREVOR. I am fully aware of the prejudices my proposition must encounter; still, my ideal of the intellectual inquirer pure and simple is precisely 'Faust without Gretschen.' I know what will be urged as to the loss of human interest, but that I consider as an imperfection to be alleged only by those who regard it exclusively from a dramatic point of view. That is not altogether the position from which I contemplate it. I ask myself what would be the probable action of an intellectual inquirer who was bending all his energies to solve the problems of the universe, or to discover truth; and I conceive it *à priori* improbable that he would be content to abandon the intellectual search, and to try to find his pearl-bearing oyster by a hasty and ill-considered plunge into the wild sea of human passion. My own ideal of intellectual Skepticism is the Prometheus of Aischylos, or, for that matter, the reproduction of it by Goethe. There we have research and inquiry for its own sake, uncontaminated with baser motives. Moreover, in the Skeptical drama of 'Hamlet,' where the attention of the hero is absorbed by the *pros* and *cons* of a difficult duty, the love-interest is distinctly subordinated, even if it can be said to have any real existence.

MRS. HARRINGTON. I think you have overlooked a fact which serves to show that Goethe himself could not have set

great store on the passion episode of Faustus, for we must remember that it is Mephistophiles that introduces him to Gretschen.

TREVOR. Faust's passion, though forming no part of the original legend, is more than an episode; it is the plot of Goethe's drama. No doubt Mephistophiles inveigled him; but my contention is that the allurement, besides being diabolically suggested, is incongruous, for it is physical, not intellectual; and, given a thinker who had penetrated so fully into the problems of existence and the nature of their only conceivable solution, it is extremely improbable that he should have been taken by such a bait. As Coleridge said on this very point, 'Between sensuality and thirst after knowledge there is no connection.' I don't mean to say that intellectual Samsons have not oftentimes met with their Delilahs, and been shorn of their strength, but not when they have been of the exalted type of Faustus. As an illustration of the incongruity, conceive, *e.g.* Aischylos making Prometheus submit himself to the tyrant of Olympus for the sake of the love of one of the sympathetic daughters of Ocean![1] or imagine Shakespeare allowing Hamlet to forego his high emprise, and permitting the 'native hue' of his 'resolution' to be blenched, not by the inherent difficulties of his position, but by the charms of Ophelia!

ARUNDEL. Your argument, Doctor, is characteristic of an inveterate old bachelor like yourself.

TREVOR. As to that, I do not wish to impugn the wisdom of married people generally; but I should certainly distrust the wisdom, if not the sanity, of the professed searcher after truth who sought to find in marriage an adequate solution of the puzzles of the universe. Hymen is doubtless represented as a lamp-bearer, but I never heard the most deliriously enthusiastic of his votaries ever affirm that his torch is identical with the lamp of truth and knowledge.

[1] The marriage of Prometheus with Hesione, though incidentally mentioned by Aischylos, forms no part of the older myth. Comp. Welcker, *Die Aesch. Tril.* p. 12.

ARUNDEL. But Aischylos had a semi-divine Titan for his hero—Goethe only aimed at creating a man. Take the case of Abélard; does not the romance of his life enhance our interest in him as a thinker?

TREVOR. No doubt Abélard is an actual example of the delineation which Goethe employs in Faust; a man in whom the passion interest is on a level with the intellectual, though I am not aware that even he ever regarded Héloïse as a complete answer to his intellectual difficulties and doubts; but, observe, he stands alone in the history of philosophers. We shall have ample proofs, in the Skeptics on our proposed list, of the preponderance of intellectual over sentimental or passion interests, and so far a justification of our resolution to confine ourselves to the former, and eschew the latter as too unimportant for consideration.

ARUNDEL. In other words, we must divest ourselves of humanity, and attire ourselves as high priests of philosophy. Well, I am quite willing—as a temporary experiment.

HARRINGTON. Another reason why we should limit ourselves mainly to intellectual causes of Skepticism is, that sentimental causes are not susceptible of discussion, which implies and demands reasoning. Besides which, they are merely personal. Hence I quite approve of Trevor's ideal of the true intellectual Skeptic, as Faust without Gretschen, Abélard without Héloïse, and Hamlet who, in the interests of a higher pursuit, has buried his love in the grave of Ophelia.

After a short silence, which none of the party seemed disposed to break, Harrington said: 'Well, as we seem to have discussed sufficiently the main points of Dr. Trevor's Essay, I propose we retire to the drawing-room, and, as an appropriate recreation after the dissonance which naturally pertains to Skepticism and discussion thereupon, solace ourselves with musical harmony—and tea.'

. . . . . .

Before the party broke up, it was arranged that the next meeting of the friends should take place at Hilderton Hall, on which occasion Dr. Trevor promised to read the first of

his papers on 'Pre-Christian Skepticism,' taking in the Skeptical elements in Greek thought up to the time of Sokrates. Further, they decided for the present to hold their meetings fortnightly, in order to complete before the approach of winter their survey of Pre-Christian Skepticism—the preliminary portion of their inquiry.

EVENING II.

GREEK SKEPTICISM.

I.

'Es giebt schwerlich ein besseres Bildungsmittel des philosophischen Talents überhaupt, und eine zweckmässigere Vorbereitung, um insbesondere den Geist, die Tendenz und das Verdienst der Philosophie unsers gegenwärtigen Zeitalters richtig zu fassen und zu würdigen, als das Studium des Skepticismus der Griechen.'

RUHLE, *Preface to Translation of 'Sext. Emp. Pyrr. Hyp.'* p. 1.

'Initio est philosophandi genus dogmaticum; mens adhuc non satis philosophando exculta, neque disputando bene exercita, rarissime dubitat.'

SIEDLER, *De Scepticismo*, p. 15.

'Toutes les fois donc que l'esprit humain est sur le point de s'endormir dans l'un de ces systèmes, le scepticisme vient l'éveiller en sursaut et le forcer à continuer sa route, jusqu'à ce qu'il trouve quelque nouvel asile dont il est chassé encore.'

A. FRANCK, *De la Certitude*, p. 70.

'Πάντων μὲν γὰρ αἴτιος τῶν καλῶν ὁ Θεὸς· ἀλλὰ τῶν μὲν κατὰ προηγούμενον, ὡς τῆς τε διαθήκης τῆς παλαιᾶς καὶ τῆς νέας· τῶν δὲ κατ' ἐπακολούθημα, ὡς τῆς φιλοσοφίας. τάχα δὲ καὶ προηγουμένως τοῖς Ἕλλησιν ἐδόθη τότε πρὶν ἢ τὸν κύριον καλέσαι καὶ τοὺς Ἕλληνας. Ἐπαιδαγώγει γὰρ καὶ αὐτὴ τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν ὡς ὁ νόμος τοὺς Ἑβραίους εἰς Χριστόν. προπαρασκευάζει τοίνυν ἡ φιλοσοφία προοδοποιοῦσα τὸν ὑπὸ Χριστοῦ τελειούμενον.'

CLEMENS ALEX. *Strom.* lib. i. chap. v. Ed. Potter, vol. i. p. 331.

EVENING II.

PRE-CHRISTIAN SKEPTICISM (GREEK).

I.

It was arranged between the Harringtons and the Rector of Hilderton that on the day appointed for their next meeting they should drive over to Hilderton early, and, having lunched at the Rectory, should take a walk over the downs, in order to show Miss Leycester, who had never been in Wiltshire before, its characteristic features. This they accordingly did. The day was beautifully fine, more like midsummer than the middle of August; and, attracted both by the beauty of the weather and congenial society, Dr. Trevor and his sister accompanied them. Arundel took his friends to the top of the highest down in the neighbourhood, whence they were able to note the peculiarities of a Wiltshire landscape. From a narrow spur of the downs, the summit of which was crowned by a clump of firs—a 'piny promontory'—which overlooked two broad, fertile valleys, he was able to point out no fewer than eight church towers and steeples, including the famous spire of Salisbury Cathedral. Of these, however, Dr. Trevor was only able, with the aid of his spectacles, to discover five.

'I hope, Doctor,' said Arundel, jocosely, 'you don't dispute the fact that we are able to see eight?'

Trevor. I don't dispute the fact that such is your expressed belief, and I will add that its truth is rendered additionally probable to me by independent evidence. As to the demonstration or absolute certainty of the alleged fact, that is altogether another matter.

Harrington. I have no doubt if Sextos Empeirikos were here he could assign many plausible reasons, not against the individual belief of each of us in the testimony of his or

her senses, but against a too hasty inference in the direction of a general and unimpeachable certainty.

MISS LEYCESTER. But must not absolute truth be, in ultimate analysis, always individual and personal? The certainty of others, communicated orally or in any other manner to us, seems to me different not only in degree but in kind from the certainty imparted by the actual operation of our own healthy senses. For instance, we can see eight towers from this spot—Dr. Trevor is only able to see five. Although we are six to one, and he believes our united testimony, yet the impression of our spoken words is surely a more indirect and *ipso facto* imperfect evidence than the witness of his own visual organs, if perfect, would have been.[1] What an enormous difference there is, especially in respect of clearness and sharpness of definition, between the impression conveyed to us by the most elaborate description of a landscape or a picture and that which we receive by gazing on it ourselves!

HARRINGTON. Very true, Florence. But have the goodness to remember that the absolute certainty you claim as a personal prerogative is similarly claimed, and with just as much right, by everyone else.

TREVOR. Miss Leycester has opened up a wide and interesting subject, viz. the nature and limits of operation of the old saw of Protagoras, 'Man is the measure of all things.' But if we pursue our present conversation we shall perhaps encroach on our subject of this evening.

Here the conversation took another turn—as to the derivation of the names of villages and hamlets in South Wilts.

. . . . . .

Dr. Trevor's dinner-hour was five o'clock both in winter and summer; consequently the friends were able to assemble in the library and commence the evening's discussion at a comparatively early hour.

The company had seated themselves in the inclosure

[1] Compare Voltaire, *Dict. Phil.* art. 'Vérité.' 'Celui qui a entendu dire la chose à douze mille témoins oculaires, n'a que douze mille probabilités égales à une forte probabilité, laquelle n'est pas égale à la certitude.'

formed by a noble bay-window, overlooking the church and village of Hilderton, when the host, who had been called away for a short time, re-entered the library, reciting:

> Up! up! let us a voyage take;
> Why sit we here at ease?
> Find us a vessel light and snug,
> Bound for the Eastern seas.
> I long to see the Eastern light—

not the fitful and evanescent aurora borealis of Montgomery's poem, but the genuine *ex oriente lux.*

HARRINGTON. True, Doctor; and what makes it of momentous interest to us, the source of much of that light and warmth we enjoy in the West.

MRS. HARRINGTON. A voyage to distant countries without moving out of our easy-chairs, or out of sight of Mr. Arundel's picturesque church-tower, will be very interesting. But what shall we say is its especial object? What are we to load home with? Shall we compare ourselves to the Argonauts, and say that we are in search of the Golden Fleece, *i.e.* truth?

ARUNDEL. Better suppose it a natural fleece, and then we can say we are gone 'wool-gathering.'

HARRINGTON. Nay, Arundel; we can easily devise a cargo more complimentary to ourselves as navigators. Suppose we say that we are looking for a few of those fragments of truth which Milton in his 'Areopagitica' tells us are scattered 'to the four winds;' or for some reminiscences of that primæval revelation which, according to Clemens of Alexandria, is a necessary assumption in order to account for the varied wisdom of Greece.

TREVOR. I do not see that we want mythology or patristics to suggest the object of our voyage. We are bent on tracing a certain natural production—for the nonce we may suppose it botanical—called Skepticism. We have not a few species of it at home, at least within reach, which we are about arranging in our herbarium; but we happen to know that abroad there are several varieties we do not possess, and which have distinct and interesting features of their own.

Greece, for instance, is the native home of several species, of which we may enumerate *Dialectica*, *Academica*, and *Pyrrhonica*. In India we meet with a tropical variety, not, however, unknown in Europe, called *Skepsis negativa* or *mystica*, while Palestine will furnish us with a kind which we may call *Hebraica* or *Theologica*. Our voyage is, therefore, purely scientific. We desire to study the several species in their own localities, in the climate and general environment which gave them birth, as well as to bring home a few specimens for purposes of comparison and to complete our collection.

HARRINGTON. Ours is, in fact, a kind of *Challenger* expedition, only directed to mental instead of physical discoveries. By the way, we shall have to make some intellectually 'deep-sea soundings.' The depths of Hindoo speculation are somewhat abysmal.

ARUNDEL. Well, we must get down so far as our instruments will allow us, and guess the rest. I think it is true of all intellectual as of some mineral products, that they are not found of any value below a certain depth, so that exploration beyond that point becomes useless. Many of the results of metaphysical investigation, when profound, as it is called, are worse than worthless. Hence I would have some philosophical systems treated like the shafts of an old disused coal-mine, *i.e.* fenced round with barricades, to hinder the approach of the too curious or unwary passer-by.

HARRINGTON. No doubt many of those intellectual mines have been pretty well exhausted at different times, and no promising result could be anticipated from further research. Nevertheless, there must be no barricades; we must avoid placing any limit to human enterprise. The worst of these extremely profound metaphysics you speak of is, that to examine the ore we must, so to speak, descend ourselves to the bottom of the mine, after enduring the customary inconvenience of donning the miner's own costume and carrying his 'farthing dip' in our hands; for it is only when these learned profundities find us in their own recesses, and enveloped in the darkness in which their lives are spent, that they are able to say, 'Behold the metal! See it gleam-

ing in the dark,' when perhaps we are able to perceive nothing except 'a darkness that may be felt.' In such a case, I feel inclined to say, 'Well, if you really have it, dig it out and carry it to the surface, and we will examine and test it by daylight, and so ascertain its value.' Of course, the reply is invariably, 'Your intellect is shallow and superficial,' &c.

MISS LEYCESTER. I don't think your fencing round these exhausted systems, if there are any, would be very efficacious. There are minds on which an unintelligible profundity exercises the same morbid fascination as certain persons find in a material precipice. Directly they see it, they feel impelled to cast themselves, like intellectual suicides, into the fathomless depths beneath. Nor do I think it reasonable that you should expect those deep miners in metaphysics to reveal the secrets of their prison-house. Did you ever know any hierophant, guardian of sacred mysteries, or esoteric teacher who was ready to dig out and bring his secret lore to the earth-surface and the sunshine, and thereby expose it to the prying gaze, and perhaps ridicule, of mere ordinary mortals? . . . But, if we are afraid of losing our personal identities in the extreme depths of Hindoo negation, we had better provide ourselves with a 'Davy lamp' in the shape of Greek suspense before we descend into their abysses.

TREVOR. By all means, we will first visit Greece, and light our exploring torches with 'Greek fire.' For that matter, there is no philosophical enterprise for which a preliminary training in Greek philosophy would not qualify us; there is no kind or phase of pure intellectual research of which you have not there distinct and definite indications; . . . and we must remember that nine-tenths of the writings of these ancient sages are no more. I have often thought that, if we had extant every page written by them, every possible scheme of philosophical speculation would have been ere this completely exhausted, and all we degenerate moderns could do would be to con our several lessons, and draw our supply from this ancient fount of universal wisdom. . . . But before we take up our ideal standpoint in

Greece, there is a preliminary duty which I hope we all possess sufficient strength of imagination to discharge.

HARRINGTON. And what may that be, Doctor?

TREVOR. We must transport ourselves, without the material aid of a magic carpet or anything of the kind, into the midst of the scenery, language, thought, culture, and religion of ancient Greece, 500 B.C.

MRS. HARRINGTON. But how is that possible, Dr. Trevor, with all these pleasant surroundings of English civilisation in the latter half of the nineteenth century before our eyes?

TREVOR. Quite easily. We have only to shut those organs of physical eyesight which, pretending to guide, so frequently mislead us, and open instead those of our mental vision which have done such enormous service in the history of human development. No sooner do we do this, than presto! (with a wave of his hand) the whole scene is changed! We are seated in the vestibule of a Greek country-house. Around us are, not rose trees, rhododendrons, and laurels, but olives and myrtles interspersed with fig and pomegranate trees from which the fruit has been recently collected. We are attired in the flowing, picturesque garb of old Greece, and look as if we were enlarged and vivified copies of the Elgin marbles. I am addressing you in the purest Attic dialect—the only language, in my opinion, becoming a genuine philosopher. . . . You cast a glance down the valley yonder, and there, where Arundel's steeple stands (or rather stood a moment ago), you trace the columned portico which marks the entrance to the Temple of Athênê, of considerable local celebrity. The trees in the churchyard (or rather what were so) are the olives within the sacred inclosure of the temple. Around are the wretched flat-roofed hovels of the Attic peasantry. Those people you hear shouting in the distance are bringing home, not the harvest of barley-fields, but enormous clusters of luscious grapes—the produce of those vine-clad hills you see around you—

ARUNDEL (interrupting). For goodness' sake, Doctor, have some pity on our more sluggish imaginations. It is not everyone that is gifted with the power of conjuring up

at a moment's notice such a transformation scene as you are depicturing.

TREVOR. Well, you must contrive to make as close an approximation as you can to my ideal picture. What I want to get rid of is that overpowering sense of incongruity that besets us when we try to realise the men and thoughts of other times. . . . I once knew a man—a clergyman—who lived in a delightful spot in the Midland counties. Although he wore the clothes and spoke the language of an English gentleman of our own day, he was in reality an ancient Greek—to his very finger nails. His thoughts, studies, occupations, imaginations, were all Hellenic. His mornings were usually devoted to Greek philosophy, his evenings to Greek poetry; he modelled his sermons on the Attic orators, and read Greek romances when he was inclined for such recreation. I have heard him accidentally address his old housekeeper in Greek, and I verily believe he used to think in Greek. His subjective prepossessions coloured not unnaturally his objective environment. Transformed by his vivid imagination, the scenery of his neighbourhood had become to him redolent of classical associations. . . . Alas, poor man! The whole fabric of Hellenic idealisation which he had elaborated with so much care, was destined to fall before the ruthless advance of modern civilisation. The Midland Railway came and cut a branch line through his glebe, not two hundred yards from his front door, and about a dozen times a day the snorting of a steam-engine and the roar of a passing train rudely woke him from his classical dreams. The consequence was that his picturesque illusions—the illusions of the greater part of his life—were utterly destroyed. Where he had imagined a Temple of Hêrê, stood an uncouth railway embankment. The iron-road cut through the grove he had conceived to be inhabited by Athênê and her nymphs. The secluded and tree-margined pool which had suggested itself as an admirable habitat for Naiads and Dryads was partly dried up and wholly defaced by the hideous railway bank. Not even his imagination, powerful as it was, could conceive modest nymphs disporting themselves in a narrow segment of not over-clean water within a few yards of continually passing

trains loaded with Birmingham artisans. If he went indoors and tried to read Greek tragedy, and conjure up its scenery and surroundings, the incongruity was too painful. The roar of a train and the puffing of an engine sounded in his ears like the mocking laugh of a horrible demon. The neighbourhood which I used jocularly to call *Græcia Minor* was completely changed: in the words of Byron—

'Twas Greece, but living Greece no more.

He bore the anguish of the change for a short time, then he resigned his living and fled in disgust. He is now ending his days in Southern Greece; but even there, in the native home of his intellectual *idôla*, he fails, as he has told me, to realise his favourite classical associations so vividly as he used to in his old English parish.

HARRINGTON. I can imagine few products of modern civilisation more painfully out of harmony with a dreamy, classical idealism than a locomotive. Its resistless, headlong progress is the very incarnation of brute force. Its swiftness is a type of the eager, rushing disquietude of modern existence, and a complete contrast to the normally quiet, slow processes of Nature, as well as to the ease, calm dignity, and refinement of Hellenic life and thought.

ARUNDEL. Nevertheless, as a votary of modern civilisation, and, I fear I must add, *material* progress, I should like to experience the change which passing trains would entail on my parish and neighbourhood. Hilderton is, I am afraid, not likely to be transformed in that way. . . . Meanwhile we are diverging from our subject. . . . Where do you intend us to meet the stream of Greek philosophy? I presume you do not mean to take us to the fountain-head of Homer or Thales?

TREVOR. I might easily find a precedent for making Homer my starting point; for the Greek Skeptics actually attempted to discover their principles in the '*Volks Evangelium*,' as they have been termed, of the Homeric poems—on the same principle, no doubt, which impels all Mahometan sects to discover a *locus standi* in the Koran, and the many varieties of Christians to hinge each its own faith on the

Bible. Homer is, I need hardly say, the most unconsciously dogmatic author in existence, and all the quotations adduced to prove his Skepticism are mere general remarks on the mutability of men and human affairs. . . . Our present brief sketch of Hellenic free-thought begins about 500 B.C., and ends about 200 A.D., thus comprehending a period of seven hundred years.

MISS LEYCESTER. I have lately been refreshing my memory on the history of Greek philosophy. Its most marvellous feature seems to be the rapid growth which it manifested between 700 and 400 B.C. In the comparatively short space of three centuries, those old Greeks appear to have originated, developed, and almost exhausted systems of speculation closely akin at least to those that occupy our attention now. I presume that such a fact has no parallel in the history of any other nation, ancient or modern.

TREVOR. Undoubtedly not, Miss Leycester. It is the most marvellous phenomenon to my thinking in the whole history of human thought, and the due and orderly sequence which characterises these early speculations is not their least wonderful feature. I have sometimes thought that a man accustomed to the questions of children, and to the study of the growth of the human intellect, might almost map out the early stages of Hellenic thought without reading a page of Greek philosophy. There you have, in easy and natural sequence, the physical, concrete perceptions of the child succeeded in imperceptible gradations by the logical forms and verbal convictions, abstract terms, and metaphysical ideas, nascent doubt, and deliberate Skepticism of the grown man.

HARRINGTON. With a little abatement of Skepticism being considered as the *only* goal of Greek thought, the advance you have sketched is substantially correct; but we must take heed of a misconception on this point. Students of Greek philosophy, insufficiently versed in its relation to early Greek history, are inclined to exaggerate the specific range and importance of each particular thinker or school of thought. They look over the pages of Zeller, Ritter, or Tennemann, and finding a number of names duly marshalled in order, every one under his own proper school, like natural

history species each under its own genus, they rush to the conclusion that such names or schools represent successive waves of thought or definite philosophical systems which swept over the whole mental surface of ancient Greece. They forget that Greece at this time consisted of half-civilised tribes, differing from each other in political constitution, social habits, religious beliefs, and to some extent in language as well;[1] that, moreover, the dissemination of physical ideas or philosophical theories by oral teaching must have been, under the circumstances, partial and imperfect; and that it was quite possible for Thales to have taught at Miletus or Xenophanes at Elea, without the names of either thinker reaching Sparta or Athens during their lifetime.

ARUNDEL. Your warning is not unneeded. I remember having myself just those ideas of the regular succession of Greek thinkers whom I afterwards found to have been in many cases contemporaries; I used to think of them as related to each other as the kings of England or of some other country. When one ceased reigning, the next began to reign. . . . Not a few students of Greek philosophy would, I think, be greatly benefited if they would study it so far as possible in connection with chronology and history—with Clinton's 'Fasti,' for instance, at their elbows.

MISS LEYCESTER. But what causes can be assigned for this rapid development of early Hellenic speculation? It seems admitted that we cannot bring in extraneous sources or incitements, such as, *e.g.* an acquaintance with Egyptian or Indian civilisation. Is there anything known of the early inhabitants of Greece that would throw light on the subject?

TREVOR. Unhappily, not much. The origin and early history of Greek thought are enveloped in dense mythological darkness. We only know, or rather suppose, that different branches of the Aryan race, emigrating from Asia, settled in different parts of Greece at a very remote period. But these

[1] On the limitations imposed by these local characteristics in the progress alike of Greek Literature and Philosophy, compare Ritter, *Gesch. der Phil.* i. p. 177; and Bergk's exhaustive article on Greek Literature. Ersch and Grüber, *Encycl.*, vol. lxxxi., series i.

different tribes—Pelasgi, Hellenes, Leleges, and minor peoples —stand in the same relation to the Greeks of the fourth century B.C. as the Celts, Saxons, Danes, and Normans stand to the ordinary English or Welsh men of our own day. It seems clear, however, that the earliest manifestations of Greek thought are discovered in the Ionian colonies,[1] whence we may draw the twofold inference which is, moreover, confirmed by history: (1) That Greek speculation in its earlier stages was closely allied with Greek commerce. (2) That the mixture of races, the ordinary effect of expatriation, must be considered favourable to the growth of Hellenic thought and civilisation. I may add that most historians attempt to discriminate between the thought tendencies of Ionians and Dorians, making the speculations of the former incline towards physical, those of the latter (represented by Pythagoras) to ethical, research.

MRS. HARRINGTON. You say that colonisation and commerce exercised a favourable effect on Greek speculation. Would not the same causes facilitate and render likely the influence of foreign thinkers?

HARRINGTON. For my part, I am so fully convinced of the native self-sufficiency of the Hellenic tribes, that I view with jealousy every attempt to make even the rudimentary commencement of their intellectual and artistic achievements the borrowed wealth of their neighbours.[2] The slight admixture of foreign elements perceptible in the speculations of a few Greek thinkers, *e.g.* Pythagoras, seems to me fully accounted for by the fact that the chief Greek philosophers were themselves great travellers. Unlike modern thinkers, who, for the most part, pass their life in their studies and promulgate their opinions by the aid of the press, their Greek

[1] This is as true of its literature as of its philosophy. Speaking of the enormous influence exercised by these colonies in the development of Greek literature, Bergk says, 'Es ist fast keine Stadt, oder Insel, mag sie auch noch so klein sein, die nicht irgendwie thätigen Antheil an der Pflege der Literatur genommen hätte.' Art. on 'Greek Literature.' Ersch und Grüber, vol. lxxxi., series i.

[2] Compare Zeller's emphatic words. 'Wenn es je ein Volk gegeben hat, das seine Wissenschaft selbst zu erzeugen geeignet war, so sind dies die Griechen. *Phil. d. Griechen*, i. 40; so also Professor Prantl, *Geschichte der Logik*, i. p. 6.

prototypes shifted their abode from one town or country to the other, and wherever they went they opened what Aristophanes calls their 'thought-shop,' and were prepared to discuss and give their opinion on any question brought before them, whether of speculation or practice, with as much insouciance as a grocer in our day serves tea and sugar to his customers. They were equally willing to argue with, instruct, and exhort any chance passer-by, or even to learn of him if he proved himself competent to teach. In this particular, the modern parallels of the old Greek philosophers must not be sought in such men as Kant, Hegel, or John Stuart Mill, but rather in missionaries or travelling preachers like Whitfield or Wesley; and nothing proves, I think, the rare susceptibility of the Greek mind for speculation, as well as, at this time, their intellectual freedom, than that the careers of such animated circulating libraries (for in those days men were books) as Xenophanes and Pythagoras should have been possible. Of course, we are not surprised to find that the personal contact with men of different races, customs, and beliefs, which such peregrinations entailed occasionally, induced, as in the case of Herodotus,[1] a certain amount of disbelief in travellers' wonders. For that matter, geography has always been a favourite armoury for Skeptical weapons.

TREVOR. I must now begin my paper; but, before I do so, there is one observation I should like to make by way of general admonition as to the manner in which our researches should be pursued. In treating of any particular Skeptic, we must take his Skepticism, whenever possible, for what he himself professes it to be; avoiding, in all doubtful cases, the constructive or inferential Skepticism which is so common with dogmatic writers on the subject. Nor must we attempt to make any particular phase of unbelief fit in with a man's whole system of thought, congruity being a far rarer attribute of the human intellect than is commonly thought. Nor, again, must we undertake or sanction that easy conversion of Skeptics into dogmatists which consists in the transformation of their negations into the direct affirmations of their opposites—changing their *minuses* into *pluses*, to use an

[1] Comp. Grote, *Greece*, vol. i. p. 357.

algebraic expression—and thereby ignoring the numberless intervenient positions of neutrality or suspense which are easily conceivable in such circumstances. Professing, as we do, to render some account of the unbeliefs of philosophers, we must concede, at least theoretically, that a *tabula rasa* is not an impossible condition of mind for even profound thinkers. And we must abstain in every such case from inscribing on its virgin surface the writing which it seems to us, for whatever reason, ought to be found there.

ARUNDEL. Allowing that to be desirable as the aim of our researches, it appears to me that we shall find its practical realisation very difficult. A man's mind is so compounded of beliefs and unbeliefs, of convictions, probabilities, and uncertainties of every degree of assurance and doubt—and these are blended together so indissolubly, oftentimes, like the lights and shadows in a painting, being different aspects of the same truth—that it is almost impossible to eliminate any single conviction or non-conviction without doing violence to the rest.

TREVOR. The difficulty you speak of lies, I think, in us, rather than in the objects of our studies; that it is, if I may be allowed the terms, subjective rather than objective. Partly by natural instinct, but still more by prejudices of education and habit, we have acquired an almost invincible tendency to sum up a man's intellect by its positive rather than by its negative characteristics, to formulate creeds rather than to enumerate doubts and uncertainties. Hence any such operation as the summing up of a man's unbeliefs is assumed to be impossible. You cannot, it is urged, make a sum-total of a collection of cyphers. But in this method of putting the matter there lies a fallacy which is readily detected when we consider the nature of belief, viz. that it is a certain relation or attitude of the mind towards a given object or idea.[1] The primary fact of the possession by the mind of such a relation is entirely unaffected by its nature, which may be affirmative, or negative, or neither. In regard, therefore, to commonly accepted or current beliefs, the denial of any specific article

[1] 'Le doute comme la croyance est un mode, une forme de la pensée. *Bartholmess Huet*, p. 13, note.

of faith is by no means an unimportant fact—a pure negative to be denoted by a cypher. It expresses a positive relation just as much as an affirmative does. Hence a man's disbelief or his unbelief, his mental hostility or indifference to any given proposition, are just as susceptible of enumeration as his beliefs are, and a non-credo may be compiled as readily as a creed. Indeed the advance of a community in intellectual progress is often better described by its negations or cast-off beliefs, than by the affirmations it has substituted for them; just as the progressive growth of an animal that casts its skin every year would be more distinctly marked by a collection of such exuviæ, than by the record of its actual present dimensions. Besides, the prevalent conception of the human mind as a kind of vessel containing so many articles of faith or knowledge, whence unbeliefs are held to imply its emptiness, is misleading; for in reality a mind stored with reasoned unbeliefs may be fuller of truth than one bursting with unverified convictions. To which I may add the fact that many forms of negation have taken, especially in the East, a positive and dogmatic aspect. What we regard, *e.g.* as the *creed* of the Buddhist is in reality a *non-credo* of progressive Skepticism commencing with the external world, and gradually eliminating all objects and modes of knowledge until it ends with a denial even of self-consciousness.

HARRINGTON. It is just this unceasing equipoise of affirmation and negation that constitutes, in my opinion, the peculiar and surpassing excellence of Hellenic speculation—the sublime indifference to every interest and consideration excepting truth. This it is which has made its thought the fullest and most comprehensive, the most calm and unimpassioned, the purest and most Skeptical of all the great products of human culture and mental activity.

ARUNDEL. In your high estimate of Greek thought I concur—generally. I have at least only two faults to find with it as a whole—(1) It puts everything too much in a *lumine sicco*, a dry light of pure intellectualism. (2) It does not take sufficient account of human infirmities; makes little allowance for our natural sympathies; and that is one reason why when in its prime it influenced social life so unfavourably from an

ethical point of view. A union of extreme æsthetic and artistic development with moral depravity, like the marriage of a goddess to a satyr, is to me a painful object of contemplation. A cold light, like that of the moon, merely sheds a weird, ghastly paleness over vegetation. The light that nourishes, expands, vivifies must be accompanied by heat. Unfortunately truth itself is in this respect frequently like moonshine, as Schiller says:—

> Sie geben ach nicht immer Gluth
> Der Wahrheit helle Strahlen.

Greek thought seems to me to have been a truth of this kind. Unsuited to weak, erring men and women, it was admirably adapted for a nation of philosophers.

HARRINGTON. Which Greece, immediately before and after the death of Sokrates, actually was. . . . I think you regard Greek thought too exclusively from a religious point of view, Arundel. No doubt its main characteristic is enlightenment—an intellectual clarifying process; but surely there is no real deficiency in its stress on natural weaknesses nor in its recognition of them. In every department of its artistic and literary energy—in its sculpture and painting, dramatic and lyric poetry—you have ample proofs of this. In fact, the Greeks could not ignore what was so clearly and indisputably *natural* as the emotional, wayward, and erring side of humanity. That Hellenic thought and art do not constitute a religion, as we commonly understand the term, and that the Dialogues of Plato and the Tragedies of Sophokles do not produce on minds trained by Christianity the soothing or ascetic influence of the Psalms of David or the Gospel of St. John, is doubtless true; but it is equally true that we have no right to expect them to do so. Nor do I think your quotation from Schiller applicable to Greek culture. At least it is an application he could not have sanctioned. What you make an objectionable feature in Hellenic thought was to Schiller a positive merit; so he says, in his well-known 'Götter Griechenlands'—

> Finstrer Ernst und trauriges Entsagen
> War aus eurem heitern Dienst verbannt.

But instead of bemoaning such a defect, or regarding it as light without heat, he, on the contrary, thinks that it is we with our excessive other-worldliness, and our repression of the joyous naturalism of the Greeks, who have caused to disappear the life-warm forms of Hellenic Nature personation.

> Ach! von jenem lebenwarmen Bilde
> Blieb der Schatten nur zurück.[1]

But what is the second charge you bring against Greek thought?

ARUNDEL. Precisely what, if you agree with Schiller's 'Gods of Greece,' you may consider a merit. Hellenic life and morality, the ζῆν κατὰ φύσιν, is too nakedly animalistic, in my opinion, to be adopted in any state of really high civilisation—I mean a civilisation in which matter and material interests are distinctly subordinated not only to intellectual but to spiritual culture. The very quality that gave excellence to the art-conceptions of the Greek impaired his moral character.

HARRINGTON. But may not the idea of purely intellectual self-development, the elimination by natural reason of the mere animal in man, which occupies no inconsiderable space in the best Greek literature, form a corrective to excessive animalism, as potent and as valuable as the Christian theory of asceticism and self-denial?

ARUNDEL. Possibly in the case of a few select minds—certainly not in the average Greek man or woman. To Christians Nature and her laws are subordinated or largely modified by religious restraints, by the conception of a holy God and a sinless Jesus, by the inherent sublimity of a spiritual existence. But what could the Greek have as a corrective of the pure animalism which is the undoubted outcome of many aspects of Nature? His whole Pantheon was only a collection of varied forms of sensualism.

[1] It should, perhaps, be noted that Schiller's interpretation of the relation of Hellenic thought to Nature varied at different times. In his earlier works, *e.g.* '*über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*,' he complains that the Greek interpretation of Nature was too intellectual, and insufficiently emotional. But later, in his *Ode to the Gods of Greece*, he allows that there was a correspondence between the suggestions of Nature and the emotions of man that is no longer possible in our time.

TREVOR. I think you are unjust in denying self-abnegation as well as a capacity for heroism and virtue of the highest order to the Hellenes; though the precise mode of evolution those virtues took was more akin to the self-development of philosophical morality of our own times than to extraneous commands or sanctions of a religious nature.

ARUNDEL. The self-development you speak of which may exist among those who do not profess to owe any part of it to Christianity seems to me oftentimes an unconscious but real plagiarism from its spirit. The self-mortification of Christ—the lesson of the Cross—has been before the world for so many centuries that it has won its way unnoticed into philosophical and other systems which would otherwise have hardly admitted it as an obligation. Take Comtism, for instance, with its plagiarised Altruism: originally it was meant as a substitute for Christianity, while all that it actually did was to copy it, even to its superstitions.

HARRINGTON. What you have alleged seems not improbable; only do not, in your tribute to the secret and unacknowledged power of Christianity in the modern world, be guilty of injustice to the Greeks, or, for that matter, to any heathen virtue. Take, *e.g.* the characters of Antigone and Electra. In these you certainly have the noblest self-denial inculcated without any morbid excess or obvious self-interest to detract from its merit; while in Sokrates you have a magnanimous and self-sacrificing devotion to truth and freedom, unparalleled, except in the case of Christ himself, in the history of humanity.

MISS LEYCESTER. I was just on the point of instancing Antigone—a very favourite character of mine—as an example of heroism and self-sacrifice that, if displayed in the interests of Ecclesiastical Christianity, might have procured her posthumous beatification as well as a place in the '*Acta Sanctorum*;' probably, however, she is destined to a longer immortality in the beautiful drama of Sophokles.

TREVOR. Our discussion has lasted somewhat long if regarded in respect of the time it has taken up. As to its subject, the free thought of the Greeks, no discussion could

be deemed too long, and it would be hard to imagine one sufficiently exhaustive, to do it justice.

I will now begin my paper.

. . . . . .

A definition of Skepticism that should be at once sympathetic and philosophic would be, as I hinted in my last paper, the vindication of intellectual liberty; the assertion of the absolute freedom of human faculties. Such a definition need not express the necessary limitations which would by every thoughtful mind be attached to the actual exercise of that liberty. All that is affirmed by it is that the nature of the intellect, the irrepressible tendency of the human mind, is towards freedom. If this definition be accepted, we may expect to find, among every community capable of the requisite culture, some degree of that effort after liberty which implies, if it does not necessitate, Skepticism. Not that we are to suppose that we shall anywhere discover unrestrained speculation to be a characteristic of the many. Neither the history of human thought nor our own personal experience warrants such an anticipation. The needs and sympathies of man as a social being are far too strong and irrepressible to allow many such anomalies and eccentricities. What we may fairly expect is to see free thought and Skeptical tendencies occasionally asserting themselves in spite of the numberless restraints and hindrances which community of interests, customs, thoughts, and sympathies will always try to place in its path. The history of the intellectual progress of any cultured race that was absolutely devoid of the least attempt to assert the inherent freedom of the mind, and to repudiate some or all of the social or other restraints by which its free instincts have been brought into subjection, would be as anomalous as a political history of a freedom-loving people which should contain no rebellions, no efforts for more liberty, no attacks on tyranny or despotism, no assertions, in a word, of the inalienable right of every nation to enjoy as great an amount of reasonable freedom as possible. In our proposed survey of pre-Christian Skepticism, this is what we shall actually find. In Greece, in India, in Palestine—and, had our investigation taken a wider scope, other countries and modes of thought might also have been included—the requisite allowances being made for variety of race and diversity of culture and circumstances, we meet with precisely the same phenomena. Occasionally there is an assertion more or less vehement of the free-born instincts of humanity, a repudiation of ordinary sources and means of knowledge, a dissent

from commonly accepted beliefs, a stubborn restlessness which despises the dull acquiescence, the flat stagnation of the usages, ideas, and sympathies of the many, which insists upon the thinker's own individual right to investigate and determine every subject-matter of belief or knowledge with which existence brings him in contact. Such a survey of different species of Skepticism as we now propose to institute is not merely beneficial in itself, but is absolutely necessary to the due and worthy treatment of our subject. It will reconcile us to the fact that Skepticism, notwithstanding its singularity and the consequent ill fame it has acquired from the sequacious majority of humanity, is a purely natural phenomenon—the common and inalienable property of all human thought. And while we infer from such a generalisation the fundamental similarity of the human intellect, and its methods of acquiring knowledge and reacting upon it when acquired, we shall conclude, from the hardly less marked diversities which distinguish different types of Skepticism, that such a general uniformity, like that of nature, may coexist with a considerable variety of particulars. Moreover, we here contemplate the genus of which Christian Skepticism may be regarded as a species; the general law of which it is a particular manifestation; and its adequate consideration will enable us to assimilate to a large extent the modern free-thinkers we purpose to discuss with their pre-Christian brethren. Nor is it less advantageous to contrast the workings of the human mind under varying conditions of inherent proclivity and external environment. Just as a naturalist finds it beneficial to study an animal or plant under different aspects and from opposite points of view—as, *e.g.* first in a state of freedom, next in that of captivity—so, taking as our subject of investigation the human intellect, we first of all learn its general attributes, its inherent proclivities in a state of nature, and having thus considered its habits, caprices, and eccentricities in its untamed condition, we shall be better able to appreciate the qualities manifested by it in a state of domestication and subjection. We shall not, therefore, be surprised to find that notwithstanding all efforts to coerce it, to moderate its eccentricity, to subdue its self-willed spirit, to reduce it to tameness and obedience, to put a yoke on its neck and force it to accept an extraneous authority—as, *e.g.* that of the Christian revelation—to compel it like another Samson to do service in the prison-house of ecclesiastical dogma—distinct symptoms of its original wildness and passionate love of liberty *will* occasionally manifest themselves.

1. We commence our philosophical voyage with Greece for more

than one reason. Not that it is the earliest labourer in the field of free thought—for it is certain that Hindoo Skepticism is of a date long anterior to Thales, the father of Greek philosophy—but it is undoubtedly the most remarkable. With other nations and races pure Skepticism is an incidental and occasional phenomenon. With Greece it is the normal condition of all her most eminent thought. To recur to our former simile, while the wild animal is in most cases completely tamed and domiciled, at least only occasionally breaking out into wild gambols and eccentricities—the reminiscences of its natural condition—in the case of Greece it is always untamable; the indomitable spirit, the inborn love of absolute freedom, is a quality never quite suppressed. Hence ordinary historians of Greek philosophy appear to me to labour under an enormous misapprehension when, following their usual *à priori* conceptions of growth and evolution, they try to show that Greek thought is essentially dogmatic, that its progress consists in a gradual formation and coherence of systematic tenets and beliefs, and hence that Skepticism is a passing phenomenon in its earlier growth, and serves to mark later on the senile weakness and decrepitude of its old age. Whereas the very opposite is the truth. For Hellenic speculation not only ends in Skepticism, but begins in Skepticism. The unlimited freedom of thought of which Skepticism is a necessary expression proves not the acute but the chronic and constitutional *disease*, if you will have it so, of most of the great Greek thinkers. Nor can it be said that the doubt with which Greek thought begins is of a tentative and rudimentary character. There is little or no difference in point of quality and fulness of development between its first appearance and its final manifestation. The unbelief of Xenophanes and Parmenides is almost as pronounced as that of Pyrrhôn Ainesidêmos and Sextos Empeirikos.

Nor, indeed, could it be otherwise. Freedom is the essential property of Hellenic thought and aspiration at every period of their noble history. It is alike the motive principle and goal of all the intellectual and practical activities of old Greece. In her religious conceptions and political institutions, in her literature and in her artistic development, freedom is the chief predominating influence. Such being the case, we need not be surprised, nay rather we might fairly expect, that this inherent and strongly marked tendency will occasionally overshoot itself and become excessive; that liberty will degenerate into licence, that freedom of thought will sometimes become sophistical and self-contradictory, that Skepticism will become aggressive and overbearing, and analytical methods verge on intellectual suicide. Given a people like the Hellenes,

with their keen sensibility, their full receptivity, their vivid imagination, their eager, inquiring spirit, and their high culture, and a greater or less degree of Skepticism might have been predicated beforehand as one of their chiefest characteristics. Hence Greek speculation is, more than that of any other race or people, permeated by pure positive Skepticism, and it has thus, as we shall find, been the fountain whence all other European Skepticism has drawn its arguments. Perhaps it would be hardly too much to say that Skepticism is precisely the form of Greek thought which has proved itself most endued with vitality and which is most in vigour in the present day.

One word as to the plan I shall pursue in what must necessarily be a rather long essay: I purpose to consider in chronological order the chief persons and schools of Greece which are especially distinguished for free thought, without taking note of offshoots or tendencies of a dogmatic character which have occasionally started from Greek Skepticism. Our present concern, we must remember, is not so much with Greek philosophy as with the free-thinking elements contained in it. Nor is it necessary that we should take account of all even of the great names that traditionally belong to the history of our subject, for frequently these are names of disciples who reproduce, without noteworthy modification, the views of their still more celebrated masters. It will be enough that our survey should comprehend every main species of Hellenic free thought from the Eleatic school to the time of Sextos Empeirikos.

The Eleatic School.[1]

Greek *thought*, properly so called, commences with the Eleatic school and with its founder Xenophanes. It is at this period, *i.e.* that it begins to manifest that aptitude for reflection and abstract reasoning which afterwards distinguished it. Hitherto it had been occupied with material theories as to the origin of the universe. But it deserves mention as a presage of the marvellous development it was destined to make, that even these preliminary essays mark the bold, comprehensive spirit which is

[1] The usual authorities on Greek Philosophy are well known, and therefore need no specific enumeration here; especially as those on whom most stress is laid are referred to in the foot-notes. On the subject of the Eleatics, the best work is S. Karsten's *Philosophorum Græcorum Veterum Reliquiæ*. The fragments are quoted, unless otherwise mentioned, from Karsten's work, or from Mullach's *Fragmenta Philosophorum Græcorum* (Paris, Didot).

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the characteristic of all Hellenic speculation. For they indicate that advance in human thought, and the use of philosophic terms, by means of which the universe—the sum of all existence—is grasped in a single act of cognition, and embodied and expressed in a definite word or phrase.[1] That water, fire, air should be conceived as potent or primary influences need not occasion surprise; but that any such single element should be supposed capable of producing by growth, or change, or evolution, the whole sum of existing phenomena, is, no doubt, a very wonderful fact. To this physical stage of Greek thought succeeds in due course its metaphysical stage. Material elements are found unsatisfactory, and in their stead ideal conceptions, verbal definitions or abstractions are put forward as the underlying principle of all things. This stage is reached in 'the infinite' or 'undetermined' of Anaximander, and in 'number' as the symbol of order and succession in the case of Pythagoras. It is at this point that the Skeptical philosophy of Xenophanes and his school meets us, and by means of its free, expansive spirit, its incisive method, and its general suitability to the intellect of the Hellenic race, Greek thought received an impetus and a character which were destined to mark the whole of its subsequent course.

The few facts known concerning the life of Xenophanes are: That he was a native of Kolophon, an Ionian colony on the coasts of Asia Minor, and the birthplace of several other writers more or less known in the early history of Greek literature. Of the date of his birth we have no certain record. It may be said to range from B.C. 538 to B.C. 477,[2] with perhaps a slight preponderance on the part of the best authorities in favour of the latter. When he was twenty-five years of age he was driven by some cause, probably political, from his native city. He wandered, in the manner then common to Rhapsodists[3] and travelling philo-

[1] Grote has called attention to the faculties for observation and combination, which are implied in such abstractions as *κόσμος* and *φύσις*. On the former word, see Humboldt's interesting note in his *Cosmos*, vol. i. p. 51 (Eng. trans. Bohn). It is said to date from the time of Pythagoras, but Prof. Curtius has well observed that abstract thought was already apparent in the grammar of the Greek language long before it manifested itself in the books of their philosophers. (*History of Greece*, Ward's translation, i. p. 24.)

[2] Comp. Welcker, *Der Epische Cyclus*, pp. 401, 402; Clinton's *Fasti Hellenici*, vol. ii. pp. 11 and 35; Ritter and Preller, *Historia Philosoph.* p. 81. Cousin in his *Fragmens Philosophiques* gives his date 617 B.C. The whole question is discussed by Karsten in his work above mentioned.

[3] The resemblance of Xenophanes to the Rhapsodists is still further

sophers, to Zankle and Catana, whence he migrated to Velia or Elia on the coasts of South Italy. At this celebrated home of free thought he settled for some years, if not for the rest of his life, and established the famous Eleatic school. The date of his death is as uncertain as that of his birth. If we may accept the evidence of a poem which purports to have been written by himself, he was alive in the reign of Darius, when he must have been over ninety years of age.

The Skeptical method may be said to consist generally in the aggressive action of the critical and inquiring intellect upon a given belief or body of beliefs already in existence. Hence, as a needful preliminary to a due estimate of any Skeptical thinker, we must determine as far as possible the amount and coherence of those current opinions and beliefs to which he feels compelled to oppose himself. In treating, therefore, of Xenophanes and his successors in the same school, our first endeavour must be to ascertain what were the chief convictions of an Ionian or Dorian Greek of average culture and information in the sixth century before the Christian era. First and foremost we must place that great body of mythological tradition which we find expressed in the poems of Homer and Hesiod. It is difficult for us to realise the exact position which these myths occupied in the mind and heart of the old Greek. Nothing analogous to them exists in modern European civilisation. They formed the common and prolific soil of his ideas, his convictions, and his phantasies. They furnished the nutriment of his religious beliefs, his literature and poetry, his intense love of art and natural beauty, and even, to some extent, of his political opinions. 'Such was,' says Grote,[1] 'the intellectual and imaginative reach of an ordinary Greek. . . . It was an aggregate of religion, of social and patriotic retrospect, and of romantic fancy, blended into one indivisible faith.' Added to this general mythological dogmatism, there were numerous special influences of a similar kind. Not only had each tribe its own collection of local myths and traditions, the cherishing of which was deemed indispensable to genuine patriotism, but it also pos-

shown by the structure of his poems, and his habit of reciting them publicly.

[1] Grote's *History of Greece*, 4th edit. vol. i. p. 411. It may, however, be needful to warn the reader that all general estimates as to Greek religion must be received with caution, and with due allowance for differences of date, locality, &c. Comp. Grote's *History* with Welcker, *Griechische Götterlehre*; and for an admirable *résumé* of the subject, see Petersen's article on *Greek Mythology* in vol. lxxxii. sect. i. of Ersch and Grüber.

sessed one or more sacred localities, each with its own history, its peculiar cultus, and its consecrated hierarchy.[1] Another centre of Greek belief of a private and esoteric kind is to found in the old mysteries of Orpheus and others, with their dread and unutterable rites of initiation, their mysterious modes of nature-worship, the full and unswerving allegiance to certain definite dogmas exacted of their votaries—all veiled under the garb of an inviolable secrecy. We may readily suppose that the operation of such select and incommunicable beliefs was of a comparatively limited nature; still for systematic elaboration and coherency the mysteries and the beliefs generated by them probably far exceeded the more fluctuating traditions of popular mythology. Such were, so far as we are able to determine, some of the more prominent centres of Greek dogmatic faith at the period of which we are writing. The tenacity with which the Greeks clung to their religious beliefs is sufficiently attested by the whole of their history, so that whatever influence the Skeptical teaching of Xenophanes and his numerous successors can be shown to have obtained, must not be ascribed to any such causes as a facile adoption and lax retention of religious and mythological dogmas.[2] Contemporaneously, however, with the formation of this not inconsiderable mass of current beliefs, such as probably existed in the time of Xenophanes, there were causes at work which not only rendered the disintegration commenced by the Eleatics comparatively easy, but which served to prove the native susceptibility of the Greek mind for critical processes and Skeptical conclusions.[3] First among these must be placed the keen and inextinguishable love of inquiry and discussion which was a primary feature of the Greek intellect. In no other nation, ancient or modern, was this love for intellectual gymnastics —reasoned argument for its own sake, and irrespective, for the

[1] Of course, anything like a national homogeneous faith the Greeks could not be said to possess, either now or for many centuries to come, and therefore they had no general religious creed or system of dogmas. To this cause, among others, Zeller ascribes the intellectual freedom of the Greeks, *Phil. d. Griechen*, i. p. 45. We must, however, not forget that the influence of an hereditary priesthood, the oracle at Delphi, the worship of a Pan-Hellenic Zeus, and a vague floating tradition derived from the common origin of the different Hellenic tribes, partly compensated for this want of dogmatic fixity.

[2] The contemptuous tolerance which the Roman Empire in the plenitude of its power extended to foreign deities, was dictated by its comprehensive Imperial policy. The tolerance of Athens was the outcome of its intellectual freedom.

[3] For some excellent remarks on the negative tendencies of the Greek Philosophy, see Grote's *Plato*, vol. i. pp. 242–244.

most part, of the conclusions to which it might lead—so fully developed. Neologianism, the propounding of novel doctrines,[1] which is the bugbear of our modern dogmatism, was to the old Greek thinker the welcomed opportunity for the renewed exercise of his mental faculties, and, at a later period, of his dialectical proficiency. It is only by bearing this characteristic in mind that we are able to explain the intellectual and religious tolerance which, on the whole, marks the mental history of Greece. Different attempts have been made to reconcile the incompatibility of a tenacious grasp of mythological belief co-existing with a freedom of thought and utterance which seems well-nigh unbounded.[2] But, except to note its existence and influence, this primitive struggle of reason and faith does not come into the scope of our present inquiry. We may, however, be sure that in most cases where these antagonistic forces were nearly balanced, the native bent of the Greek intellect would secure a victory for Reason rather than for her adversary.

2. But if the earnestness of Greek religious faith was necessarily opposed to free thought and inquiry, this very tendency was aided in no small measure by the diversity which was no less a main characteristic of that faith. An elaborate polytheistic system, or rather congeries of systems, composed of manifold traditions diverse in origin, form, and cultus,[3] must have possessed within it

[1] This, and not the mere avidity for 'news' in our sense of the word, is the probable meaning of the character ascribed to the Athenians in a subsequent period of Greek history. Cf. the passages collected by Wetstein, *New Test.* Acts xvii. 21.

[2] Zeller has pointed out that the uniformity in religion, *i.e.* of any particular cultus, required by the Greeks was a uniformity of ritual, rather than of doctrine. (*Phil. d. Griech.* i. 46.) In the early development of religions, the ritual was regarded as the symbol of the worshipper's devotion, of his fulness of love, awe, or reverence; it was not then deemed the expression or exponent of his doctrinal judgments or his intellectual conclusions. It would be well for the peace of Christendom if this fact and its significance were borne in mind.

[3] Even the cultus at a single shrine, as Prof. Curtius has remarked, frequently consisted of successive strata of religious usages and traditions; the newer overlying the older, as the beds of a geological formation. This was, indeed, the inevitable result of perpetual migrations and political changes. Never to destroy or suppress any worship, no matter what its origin or its nature, was an accepted maxim among the Hellenic tribes, as it was subsequently by the Romans. In either case, it was probably a silent acknowledgment of human ignorance, and of the unlimited possibilities of the universe. 'The unknown God' has ever had a far greater number of shrines and worshippers than is commonly supposed.

elements if not of antagonism yet at least of emulation and rivalry. Taking, *e.g.* the two highest Olympian divinities, Zeus and Hêre, we have under each designation several myths differing not only in locality, but in form and substance as well. The worshipper at his own local shrine would, by the inevitable tendencies of human nature, claim for its deity or its cultus a superior degree of reverence and virtue than he would concede to a rival deity or shrine. These rivalries of different creeds and modes of worship, each claiming supremacy over the rest, could not but induce, in logical minds, reflections which might easily lead, if not to absolute denial of their collective authority, at least to a guarded suspicion of the grounds on which it was sought to be established. Certainly, the various mythological systems could not all be true; the four or more rival deities bearing the name of Zeus, *e.g.* could not each be the supreme ruler of the universe. The Hêre of Argos—differing in origin, history, and worship, from her namesake of Samos—could by no possibility be deemed identical with her. Add to this the more peaceful, but yet unquestionable, rivalry existing between the deities of Olympus themselves, when they were fully recognised as differing in name and attributes from each other. No truth of Greek theology is more fully impressed on its literature from Homer to Menander. So long as the devout Hellene chose for his own particular worship one of the Olympian divinities, especially if the ruling deity of his tribe or family, he might fairly treat the others with more or less of neglect. It was not, therefore, a case like the different forms of Christianity, in which various sects possess a common ground of faith in the person and work of Christ. No such common indivisible nexus of belief can with any probability be assigned to the various successive and conflicting mythologies of Greece.[1] At an earlier period of her history, before the commercial and social intercourse of the various races and their colonies was greatly developed, no doubt each Æolian or Ionian Greek worshipped at his own local shrine, and believed his own popular or local myths, without troubling himself much about the religious beliefs of his neighbours; but with the rapid expansion of commerce and mental culture, such religious and philosophical isolation was no longer possible.

A similar impetus to free discussion and Skepticism was no doubt imparted by the variety of philosophical theories and opinions

[1] The primitive Aryan conceptions of which the myths of Greece are developments, were of a far more diversified kind than we are apt to suppose. Compare on this point Petersen's admirable article in Ersch and Grüber, sect. i. vol. lxxxii. p. 73, &c.

current among the Greeks from B.C. 450 to a late period in her history. At the time of Xenophanes, *e.g.* the several philosophers of the Ionic school had propounded their views as to the origin of the universe; and though it is conceivable that the diffusion of these early theories was limited, yet it is scarcely likely that there were not many Greeks dwelling in the centres of commerce, as, *e.g.* Miletus, to whom these and similar speculations were not fully known, and by whom they were not fully discussed. Hence, probably, arose in many cases temporary suspense, if not absolute Skepticism. Certainly such thinkers might urge, these incompatible theories could not all be true. If the 'air' of Anaximenes was the original element and source of all things, the same could not be predicated of the 'water' of Thales (the well-known conjoint operation of the four elements being the subsequent speculation of Empedokles). Besides which, opposition and dissonance were involved in the very rudiments of some of the earlier Hellenic thought-schemes. 'One said,' to quote Plato's words, 'that there were three principles warring in a manner with one another; and another spoke of two principles, a moist and dry, or hot and cold, &c.[1] It is needless to pursue this subject further; enough has been said to prove, what our subsequent investigations will serve to confirm, that, other things being equal, Skepticism generally flourishes most in communities in which religious beliefs and intellectual speculations are of the most diversified character, and in which their various claims and mutual relations are discussed with freedom and independence.

It would be easy to prolong these preliminary considerations as to the pre-eminent fitness of Greece in this portion of her history to advance the cause of speculative freedom. Tennemann and others have pointed out the effect, *e.g.* which its political division into a number of small states must have had in inducing or accelerating philosophical inquiry. For the mutual rivalry thereby engendered, the diversity of various usages and customs, the collision of conflicting interests and not unfrequently antagonistic institutions, constituted a soil for inquiry and mental progress of the most fertile and stimulating kind. In passing, I may as well point out that we have similar examples of the intellectual activity induced by the juxtaposition of a number of small free states in Italy during the Renaissance, and in Germany and Switzerland at the time of the Reformation. At a later period of Greek history,

[1] Comp. Sophistes, *Steph.* 242. A division of pre-Sokratic thinkers into 'Dualists' and 'Monists' has recently been made by S. A. Byk in his *Vorsokratische Philosophie der Griechen.* Leipzig, 1876–77.

when preliminary inquiry had done its work, the concentration of Greek thought in the intellectual metropolis of Athens was no doubt necessary for maturing the fruits of Hellenic speculation, as well as for consolidating the free political institutions of the country.

Passing from the soil to the germs of free thought which Xenophanes implanted in it, I may observe, first, that he places himself in an attitude of direct hostility to the current mythological belief of the time. It would, indeed, appear that Xenophanes was especially a religious Skeptic, and that this is the chief characteristic by which he is known in the history of Greek philosophy.[1] Thus in one of the best known of the extant fragments of his works he strikes a blow at the polytheism which was the inevitable fruit of Greek mythology—

> One God exists, among beings divine and human the greatest,
> To mortal men related neither in body nor mind.

And, in direct contradiction to the various powers and attributes commonly assigned to the different deities, he says of the One in a pantheistic (not in a monotheistic) sense[2]—

> The Whole understands and sees, the Whole, moreover, hears all things.

Similarly the material motion and personal interventions which were so liberally ascribed to the divinities of Olympus were no less distasteful to the first Greek Skeptic. Speaking of the single pantheistic principle of all things, he says—

> Toilless, by pure exertion of will he ordereth all things.

And as regards motion—

> Motionless quite, he for ever retains the self-same position,
> Nor is it fit he should range from any one place to another.

The folly of polytheism is further portrayed—

> Mortals absurdly suppose that the gods, like themselves, are born,
> And, like themselves, are possessed of senses and voice and form.

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[1] Zeller, *Phil. d. Griechen*, i. 452.

[2] Zeller well remarks that whenever a Greek philosopher expresses his dissatisfaction with the manifoldness of polytheism, we must, in harmony with the derivation of Greek mythology mainly from the processes and phenomena of nature, understand him to lean to a pantheistic interpretation of nature, rather than to an extra-mundane deity. — *Phil. d. Griechen*, i. p. 456.

And in another fragment, remarkable alike for the vigour and beauty of its language, and for the fact that it has frequently been made the basis of fable, Xenophanès points out the perennial source of all anthropomorphic conceptions of the deity—

If indeed oxen or lions, like men, were possessed of hands,
Or were gifted, like men, with the art and the skill of the painter,
Then horses in form of horses, and oxen in likeness of oxen,
Would paint the forms of the gods, and depict their figures on canvas—
Each, in a word, would fashion them after its image and likeness.[1]

We are moreover assured, by another fragment, that the relation which existed between the popular mythology and the powers and operations of nature had not escaped his observation. He says—

The goddess whom men call Iris, by nature is nought but a mist cloud,
Adorned in purple and gold and crimson of marvellous beauty.

Nor is he content with inveighing against existing systems of Greek belief and worship in general terms; he boldly comes to particulars. Homer and Hesiod—the twin parents of the popular mythology—he accuses by name of rendering the gods contemptible—

To the gods have Homer and Hesiod attributed impiously all things
Whatsoe'er among men are reputed both vile and disgraceful.
The deeds of divinities they have portrayed as foul and unholy,
And liars, adulterers, cheats, are the vaunted lords of Olympus.

And in another fragment—

He is of men to be praised who sipping his wine is recounting,
Will or memory prompting, virtues most excellent worth;
Neither discoursing for ever on battles of Titans and giants,
Nor on the Centaur's deeds—fictions of mortals of yore.[2]

In a similar strain Xenophanes claims evolution rather than

[1] Cf. Montaigne, *Essais*, book i. chap. xxii. 'Il en est . . . . . où chascun faict un Dieu de ce qu'il luy plaist: le chasseur d'un lyon, ou d'un regnard, le pescheur de certain poisson; et des idoles, de chasque action ou passion humaine.'

[2] This is necessarily a primary justification of every new movement of thought, whether in philosophy or religion. It is, however, sometimes employed to traduce such novelty; as when, *e.g.* Mahomet, in one of his earliest Suras, speaks of his unbelieving enemies, 'who, when our wondrous verses (signs) are recited to him, saith: "Fables of the ancients."'—*Koran*, Rodwell's trans. p. 17.

revelation, empiricism rather than intuitionism, as the source of human knowledge—

> By no means at the beginning did the gods reveal all things to mortals,
> But mortals themselves, by inquiry, in time have made gradual progress.

That he was not afraid to give his principles a practical application is shown by his reply to the Eleans, when they asked him whether they should sacrifice to Leukothea and bewail her or not. 'If you consider her divine, bewail her not; if human, sacrifice not,' was the characteristic reply of the Skeptic philosopher.

But it is not only with the religious ideas and beliefs of his time that Xenophanes wages war; he denounces with equal vigour the social customs and predilections of his countrymen. The peculiar combination of religious feeling with passionate admiration for human strength and beauty, which was so deeply rooted in the Greek mind, and which found vent in the games, is well known. We can, therefore, appreciate the boldness with which he attacks even these most cherished institutions of his country. In one of the longest of the extant fragments Xenophanes calls attention to this subject, and, after enumerating the various prizes bestowed on the victors in the different contests, and the national honour in which they were held, he proceeds with a singular mixture of self-confidence and what almost looks like cynicism—

> These men have their rewards,
> Though not so worthy as I; for better by far than the prowess
> Either of horses or men is my great prowess of mind.
> Surely perverse is this custom, and full of the grossest injustice,
> Bodily strength to prefer excellent wisdom above.

More than one of the fragments have a reference to Xenophanes' general position as a Skeptical thinker, by which it would appear he entirely disclaimed for himself and the rest of mankind the possibility of knowledge; *i.e.* it must be presumed, in the sense of demonstration. The following verses are remarkable:

> This, indeed, no one of men has known or can know in the future,
> What I affirm of the gods or of all other matters besides;
> For though a man should announce the greatest of possible Truths,
> He could not possibly know it; in all things supreme is opinion.

Without attempting to educe from the fragments of Xenophanes anything more than a certain congruity of thought, it must be evident, I think, even from the rough paraphrases I have put before you, that they represent a thinker of keen and Skeptical intellect, coupled, moreover, with a moral fearlessness and disregard

for popular convictions which is not the inseparable accompaniment of a doubting tendency. It may help us to realise more vividly, even though the parallel be necessarily imperfect, the Skeptical position of Xenophanes, as well as to appreciate the noble tolerance of the Hellenic mind for all speculations of a philosophical character, if we imagine some self-elected apostle of unbelief dealing with the cherished opinions of our own age and country in a manner similar to that of Xenophanes. Imagine some such peripatetic thinker traversing our own island, and, in various public lecture rooms, calling attention to the inconclusiveness or the contradictions of our own most dearly cherished beliefs. Suppose him, *e.g.* to animadvert on the anthropomorphic conceptions of deity contained in the Old Testament, or to stigmatise the miracles of Moses or Jesus Christ as 'the fictions of our forefathers;' or, noticing the mixture of worship and wailing with which Christians observe Good Friday, to say that if Christ were God, he need not be wept for, and if man, he should not be worshipped; or, again, suppose him on witnessing the national enthusiasm which is evoked by the Derby, or the University boat-race, or the Eton and Harrow cricket match, to express his philosophic contempt for such exhibitions of mere material skill, and to call attention to the immeasurable superiority of mental power such as his own; or, finally, imagine him in general terms to assert the futility of all dogmatism by some such Skeptical axiom as 'Opinion is supreme in all things,' and we shall then be able to estimate the boldness of this remarkable thinker, as well as the wonderful forbearance with which, so far as appears, his utterances were received by his countrymen.

Nothing is more prolific than original and incisive ideas, when cast into a suitable soil. Like material seeds sown under favourable conditions, such spiritual germs not only repeat and continue their own individual type, but they originate new and hitherto unknown varieties in which the characteristics of the parent stock are half-developed, half-hidden in a new-born wealth of diversified form and beauty. That the influence of Xenophanes was of this creative, stimulating kind, is proved by the varied character of succeeding speculation, as well as by the long and prosperous duration of the philosophic school which he founded at Elea.[1]

Of his immediate successor, Parmenides, comparatively little is known, even the main dates of his life being uncertain. It would appear that he was a native of Elea, where he lived for the

[1] See Note on School of Elea, Appendix B.

greater portion of his life. A tradition referred to more than once by Plato, states that at the age of sixty-five he came to Athens, accompanied by Zenon, who was then forty years old, and thus became acquainted with Sokrates, who must then have been quite young. The difficulty of reconciling this tradition with the chronology of Diogenes Laertius, as well as other conflicting statements respecting his teachers, may be found in the various Histories of Philosophy,[1] and need not be discussed by us. Like Xenophanes and the Rhapsodists of his time, Parmenides promulgated his philosophy in a poetic form. He would seem to have written a considerable poem on Nature,[2] of which, however, we possess only a few fragments.

We have seen that the speculations of Xenophanes represent the human mind in the process of testing and analysing current beliefs of all kinds, and ending with the discovery of their uncertainty.

In the philosophy of Parmenides we take a step further in the direction of free inquiry. He may be said to represent that stage in human thought when from the doubt and perplexity of phenomena a refuge is found in the results of introspection. The Reason and its verifying power are arrayed against the verdict of the senses; Truth against the fluctuation and uncertainty of human opinion; Being, absolute and all-comprehending, against the endless multiplicity of separate and individual existences. Here we have Skepticism placed at once on a firm metaphysical footing. The analysis of sense deliverances, the discovery of their occasional errors, the consequent protest against their authority, and the unreserved declaration of their untrustworthy character constitute indeed an important step not only in Skepticism but also in general metaphysical inquiry.

That this is Parmenides' position is shown by his teachings as they are to be gathered from the fragments which have come down to us. In one of these, probably his poem on Nature, the philosophic poet represents the young inquirer, urged on by vehement desires to obtain knowledge, after a toilsome journey entering timidly the temple where sits enthroned the Goddess of Wisdom. She welcomes the solitary traveller—

[1] Cf. Clinton's *Fasti*, ii. pp. 22, 448.

[2] This is probably the same work which Suidas calls Φυσιολογία. Most of the extant fragments seem to have been taken from it. The enormous interval which separates ancient Greek from modern scientific conceptions of nature may partly be estimated by the fact that Parmenides and Melissos include under it idealism of the most transcendental character. But to many philosophers, modern as well as ancient, the ideal is both nearer and truer than the real.

Cheer up, O youth!
For sure, no fate of ill hath impellèd thee thus to journey,
Albeit thy road from the dust of the well-trodden pathway
Traversed by human crowds, be apart in lonely seclusion.
Rather were justice and faith thy guides, and the keenest desire
Wisdom to learn, and the innermost soul of truth to discover;
Human opinions also to shun, untrue and deceptive.
Such things mayst thou learn; moreover, too, how it befits thee
By full investigation clearly to apprehend all things.

This important fragment throws considerable light on the position of early Greek thought in relation to the opinions of the many. Already have the votaries of philosophy to pursue a lonely road; already are they warned of the difficulties of the way; already are they told by the great teacher whose name became proverbial throughout Greece for pure, unselfish devotion to truth,[1] that the secrets of wisdom are disclosed only to patient and persistent inquiry. But perhaps the most remarkable point for us is the contempt urged for human opinion. We have already seen how systematically Xenophanes opposed himself to the prevailing current of Greek thought on philosophy, religion, and national and social habits. His disciple takes care to pursue the same path, even if his pronounced views on the subject do not indicate an advance on those of his master. For with Parmenides opinion is the synonym of error, and the fell adversary of truth. To guide one's footsteps by it is wilfully to choose the path of darkness, and reject that of light. At the same time it must be admitted that he does not, like Xenophanes, include his own views under the head of opinion, and, therefore, does not make his Skeptical estimate of it so positively suicidal.

In the succeeding verses he again touches this question, and urges, besides, the deceptiveness of all sense-deliverances:—

Away from this mode of inquiry steadily keep thy mind,
Nor be enticed by mortals to tread in their crookedest pathways;
To wait upon sightless eyes, and give heed to hearingless ears;
Nor list to deceiving words, but test by the firm rule of reason
The teaching I now impart, &c.

This open distrust of sensation and appeal from its conclusions to those of introspection mark, indeed, an important stage not only in the history of Skepticism, but in that of mysticism as well. It is the passing from the known, or what is so esteemed, to the

[1] Compare, on this and other points connected with the life of Parmenides, Steinhart's interesting article in Ersch and Grüber, sect. iii. theil xii.

unknown—the transition from the realm of fact, or what we are compelled to consider as such, to the region of fancy. The man who once consciously and determinedly takes this step, has crossed the Rubicon which divides the world of matter from that of mind. He breaks with older prepossessions, claims, and companionships, and starts in quest of new conquests. Columbus-like, he leaves the well-known coasts of the older continent, and spreads his sail on an unknown ocean in search of whatever he may chance to discover. But it is obvious that the final rejection of sense-deliverance constitutes the basis of its frequently concomitant rejection of human opinion. Ordinary opinion is founded in ultimate analysis on the verdict of the senses; it may, indeed, be defined as the collective sensation of a greater or lesser portion of humanity. Now, if one's own senses are to be distrusted, *à fortiori* must we refuse implicit credence to those of others. This argument from the fallibility of the senses is one which will again and again meet us in the course of our investigations. In some respects the unqualified renunciation of sense-deliverances on the part of Parmenides goes beyond the expressed opinions of the most developed Skepticism of the later Greek schools; as, *e.g.* Sextos Empeirikos, who admitted that a measure of belief in existing phenomena was irresistible.

Having attained his goal of pure reason or introspection, Parmenides discovers the truth for which he has so long been in search. This he describes in lines of which it is not easy to give an adequate rendering—

> Come therefore, I will relate, do thou to my speech give hearing,
> What are the modes of research in order to apprehend knowledge.
> One of the twain is that 'Being exists' as perforce it must do,
> Pathway this of persuasion, for verity travels along it.
> 'Being is not' is the other, and asserting non-being's existence.
> With the mind non-being thou perceiv'st not (quite unattainable this!)
> Neither with words, *for the self-same thing is Thought and Existence.*[1]

Here Parmenides reaches the extreme limit of his own, I might say, of all purely idealistic, speculation. The evidence of the senses has been discarded as the judgment of an inferior and wrongly constituted court. Appeal is made to the supreme tribunal of the reason, which gravely decides: 1. That being or

[1] Mullach, *Fragments*, p. 118. The words are somewhat differently arranged by S. Karsten, *Philosophorum Græc. Vet. Operum Reliquiæ*, vol. i. part 2. Parmenides, p. 30.

existence is true. 2. That it is a creation of, and is therefore synonymous with, thought.

We may well pause here a moment to observe what a proof these early gropings after truth exhibit of what Grote calls the 'expansiveness' of the Greek intellect and the rapidity of metaphysical growth that marks Hellenic thinkers. Within a few centuries of the commencement of their mental existence, they have already scaled the extreme heights of speculation, and are breathing not only with ease, but with a sense of enjoyment, the rarefied atmosphere of those sublime regions, which most minds can, even after long preliminary training, barely endure. It was only after some centuries of arduous mental labour, of a large experience in the diversities and subtleties of human thought, that Germany was able to produce her Hegel; his great prototype Parmenides was one of the firstborn of the philosophic children of ancient Greece. In him Greek thought has by a rapid progress attained the extreme bound of metaphysical research based upon Skeptical principles. All further effort in this direction must be applied to mere detailed labour of examining the bearings of the road already traversed, investigating its different bends and turns, and mapping itself and its surroundings for the information of the wayfarers who are to come after. Already are the senses distrusted and their evidence questioned, already are the fluctuations and uncertainties of human opinion detected, and an appeal made from them to the independent and enlightened verdict of the reason. Already the phenomena of the universe are discounted, their numberless transformations, their varied and eternal movements, are pronounced an elaborate illusion, and in their stead a permanent Ens, or unchangeable source of existence, is posited. Already, in short, the Hellenic mind, in her great teacher, has attained sufficient strength for the severest exercise of introspection, and, in her calm self-concentration, measures the totality of existence by the standard of her own thought.

But both in their starting point and in their conclusion the views of Parmenides are in their essence Skeptical. It might, indeed, seem that his doctrine of the Ens was a dogma; and in his own estimation so, no doubt, it was. But we must remember that, in the inculcation of philosophical truth, more attention is deservedly paid to the method than to the specific conclusions which are derived from it. A dogmatic superstructure upon a Skeptical foundation is a mere castle in the air, destined to fall by the first breath of reason and common sense. Hence when Parmenides rejects phenomena, and substitutes in their stead a mere

metaphysical abstraction, he only succeeded, in reality, in replacing one uncertainty by a greater. Like the dog in the fable, he threw away the substance in order to grasp at the shadow; for he not only divested knowledge and existence of all sense-deliverances, but even of those mental discriminations and judgments by which alone reasoning on metaphysical subjects becomes a possibility; so that by his method the whole sum of human knowledge is reduced to a *vacuum*, without a single attribute to characterise it, and resting only on the triliteral basis of the word which he devised for it, like an inscrutable and invisible priestess on her tripod.

Such an all-inclusive idea suggests naturally *the One* of Xenophanes, and it seems probable that we must regard it, if not as derived from, yet at least as connected with, that abstraction.[1] In any case, both are outcomes of the vigorous, far-reaching, and comprehensive nature of the Hellenic intellect. Both are arrived at by similar Skeptical processes, while each concession marks a terminus and a climax in the metaphysical method of its respective teacher. For our purpose, therefore, both philosophers are in the same category. The denial of ordinary sources and means of knowledge is the same in either case. The rejection of popular opinions and convictions is common to both. The foundations are, as I have pointed out, distinctively Skeptical, whatever may be said of the towering, albeit unsubstantial, superstructures erected upon them.

Before I leave Parmenides, I must briefly consider the position he occupies in the Platonic 'Dialogue' which bears his name, especially as this will, in my opinion, be found to illustrate and confirm the judgment I have formed of him as an early pioneer of Greek Skepticism. The high estimate in which he was held by Plato is distinctly and repeatedly recorded in his 'Dialogues.' He was his true intellectual father, 'whom he revered and honoured more than all other philosophers together.' And yet in the 'Parmenides' this great teacher is represented as overthrowing, by means of the Sokratic dialectic, that very idealism of which he is in Greek philosophy the reputed founder. The One of Xenophanes, the absolute being of his own system, are tacitly, but clearly, proved to be either unfounded or self-contradictory, or else illusory.

[1] In the *Parmenides*, e.g. Sokrates attributes to that philosopher the doctrine that the All is one. Aristotle asserts that the Ens of Parmenides is derived immediately from the One of his teacher (*Met.* i. 5). Compare Karsten and Vatke's Monograph *Parmenidis Veliensis Doctrina qualis fuerit*, pp. 40, 41, &c.

Hence comes the question, 'How is this to be interpreted? Was it Plato's object to turn the doctrines of his "Father Parmenides" into ridicule? or did he purpose to prove that the idealism he himself most affected was in ultimate analysis unsustainable?'[1] The possibility of the latter alternative, strange though it may seem at first sight, will, I think, appear when we come to discuss the Platonic Sokrates. We shall then discover that however great may have been Plato's admiration for Parmenides or Sokrates, or any other great teacher, he placed a still higher value on the logical analysis, the negative dialectic, which was connected in his mind with those illustrious names, and which he regarded as the only method of discovering truth. In the 'Parmenides,' therefore, Plato seems to me to have had the twofold purpose in view: 1. To represent a well-known phase of that philosopher's method and teaching.[2] 2. To carry out his own merciless dialectic to its extreme limits, and thereby possibly to illustrate the advance which the Sokratic elenchus had made from its birth in the school of Elea to its popular enunciation by Sokrates and himself, for Parmenides is represented by Sokrates as having taught by the method of questions (δι' ἐρωτήσεων).[3] How far there may have been a secret intention of proving the superiority of dialectic over idealism, is a question I will not undertake to answer categorically. As I have said, I do not think it at all impossible in itself, while it is quite in harmony with the grim irony which is one main feature of the Platonic dialogues.

What I wish to insist on at present is the Skeptical character of Parmenides during the period of Sokrates and Plato, who, if they were not actual disciples, lived near enough to his time to be conclusive evidence as to his reputation among his contemporaries. I may add that the estimate thus formed continues with little variation throughout the whole subsequent history of Greek philosophy.[4]

[1] 'The arguments here put by Plato into the mouth of Parmenides are "nearly, if not quite," those used by Aristotle in attacking Plato, or, at all events, those which he enumerates as the Platonic system.'—Sir A. Grant, *Aristotle's Ethics*, i. p. 200. Comp. Prof. Jowett's *Introduction to Parmenides*, iii. pp. 227 &c.

[2] Readers of Plato will hardly need to be told that Parmenides is, in the *Dialogues*, the representative among the older Greek thinkers of a negative method combined with extreme idealism. Comp. Campbell's and Jowett's *Prefaces* to the *Sophistes*.

[3] Plato, *Sophistes*.

[4] So Timon calls him, Wachsmuth, *De Timone Phliasio*, p. 52.

Παρμενίδου τε βίην, μεγαλόφρανα τὴν πολύδοξον,
Ὅς ῥ' ἐπὶ φαντασίης ἀπάτας ἀνενείκατο νώσεις.

Passing now from Parmenides, we come to the third of the great Elean triumvirate, for Melissus possesses neither the originality nor the suitability for our purpose that would entitle him to a separate notice.

Zenon of Elea, as he is generally denominated to distinguish him from his namesake the Stoic, was the son of Teleutagoras, of whom nothing further is known. He was the favourite disciple, and probably the adopted son, of Parmenides, whom he succeeded as the principal magistrate of his native city and the chief of its philosophic school. The precise year of Zenon's birth is uncertain: we have already noticed the tradition which represents him accompanying Parmenides to Athens about the year 460 B.C.[1] He was, therefore, probably born about 500 B.C. The main events of his life, so far as they can be determined from the doubtful and contradictory traditions of later writers, are narrated in histories of philosophy and classical dictionaries. Among these traditions there are, perhaps, two especially deserving of notice as being connected with our subject.

(1) That he met his death in a brave, but according to some unavailing, attempt to preserve the civic and philosophic liberties of Elea from the oppression of some foreign tyrant—a tradition to which the well-known dangers of prosperous Greek colonies from external interference, as well as the intense love of freedom which was the common characteristic of the Eleatic teachers, gives some slight measure of *à priori* probability.

(2) Zenon is regarded by the best authorities on Greek philosophy as the founder of dialectic,[2] and is also said to have been the first who wrote in dialogues. On both accounts he is a connecting link between the earliest phases of Hellenic thought and that aspect of it which will by-and-by come before us as the teaching of the Sophists and Sokrates.[3]

But, in treating of Zenon's views, we labour under some disadvantages as compared with his predecessors. In the cases of Xenophanes and Parmenides we were able to appeal to the writings of the men themselves; but in Zenon's case all that we possess consists of but a few fragments for which we are indebted to the unwearied activity of Simplikios. He is especially recorded as the

Comp also Cicero, *Acad.* ii. xxiii. 74; Plutarch, *Adv. Colotem*, § 78, Reiske, v. x. p. 612; Galen, *Hist. Phil.* c. iii. (Kuhn, T. ix. 234); Seneca, *Ep.* 88.

[1] Clinton's *Fasti* give the date as 464 B.C.

[2] 'εὑρετὴν διαλεκτικῆς.' Diog. *Laert.* ix. 25; so also Aristotle.

[3] Prantl. *Gesch. der Logik*, i. p. 9, &c.

first Greek philosopher who wrote in prose. I cannot help thinking that this fact has something to do with the disappearance of his writings. In an age when writing was almost unknown, and when both history and philosophy glided over the artificial roadway of hexameters like a modern railway carriage on steel rails, poetry was an indispensable vehicle for all oral teachings which were intended to achieve some degree of permanence. Circumstances seem to have changed after Zenon's time; at least, we possess a considerable number of fragments in prose pertaining to his successor Melissos, who, perhaps, lived at the transition period, when the memory, as the sole depository of human teaching, gave way to papyrus rolls. But the fragments of Zenon, though few, bear upon them undoubted marks of genuineness, for they harmonise thoroughly with the general characteristics of Eleatic thought as we find it in the fuller records of his fellow-teachers, as well as with the traditional estimate of himself which we have in such unquestionable authorities as Plato and Aristotle.

It will, perhaps, serve to clear the ground for my exposition of Zenon's arguments, if we glance briefly at the progress which the Eleatic thinkers have already made.

Our investigation of Parmenides left us with the abstraction Ens—the highest point to which Eleatic speculation has as yet arrived. But before proceeding further, it will be as well to note the process by which that metaphysical entity has been attained; and this is the more necessary because the arguments of Zenon come before us with more detail than those of his predecessors, as well as with a somewhat different bearing upon our subject. For if Xenophanes represents Skepticism in its relation to ordinary convictions, and Parmenides in its relation to ideal notions, Zenon, as explicitly setting forth the dialectic by which the ideal is attained, may be said to represent it in relation to language and logic. Indeed, language being the instrument and expression of thought, it is clear that Skepticism as a form of thought is closely connected with its history.

The natural and orderly sequence of Greek thought, from its commencement with the Ionic philosophy, is manifested, as I have already remarked, by the fact of its similarity to the normal growth of the human intellect. In both cases the external world is necessarily regarded as a confused chaotic mass of diverse and multitudinous objects, intruding themselves on the human consciousness by mere chance or the accident of surrounding circumstances, while the principles of order and connexion are but dimly discerned. This is the state so admirably described by Prometheus

before his gift of reason to mankind, when men, 'like infants, or the confused images of dreams, were wont to huddle up all things promiscuously.'[1] The first effort of humanity—and the effort is distinctly marked in Greek philosophy by the physical theories of the Ionic philosophers—was to ascertain the connexion or similarity among these numerous and different objects. This effort is in reality both contemporaneous and identical with the birth of reason, which fact, as you are aware, is beautifully expressed in the Greek language by the twofold meaning of *logos*, as signifying both 'reason' and 'discourse.' In other words, the human mind makes its first essays to knowledge by classification and verbal arrangement—a method which, even in its most rudimentary stages, involves and necessitates some not inconsiderable amount of logical division and abstraction.

Language was therefore—if the paradox be allowed—moulded by reason, and may be said to have philosophy interwoven into the very texture of its grammar and its syntax. The processes employed in the origination and definition of ordinary parts of speech—as common nouns, adjectives, verbal participles—could only have proceeded on a logical basis, and in conformity with logical laws. Hence, the man who first employed a common name, or marked by a single term the presence of a similar attribute in two or more different cases, was in reality the first metaphysician; while the man who, by dint of further linguistic and metaphysical progress, could abstract from any simple phenomenon its most prominent characteristic—as *e.g.* motion, as an idea or notion, from any moving body, could separate such characteristic from its merely relative or temporary surroundings, could elevate it into an unrelated unconditional entity, could, *i.e.* conceive and reason on absolute motion—was in reality a philosophical idealist of a high order.

We perceive, then, that this distinction of abstract and concrete, idea and sensation, is found in the very rudiments of human

> τὰν βροτοῖς δὲ πήματα
> ἀκούσαθ', ὡς σφᾶς νηπίους ὄντας τὸ πρὶν
> ἔννους ἔθηκα καὶ φρενῶν ἐπηβόλους
>
> . . . . . .
>
> οἱ πρῶτα μὲν βλέποντες ἔβλεπον μάτην,
> κλύοντες οὐκ ἤκουον· ἀλλ' ὀνειράτων
> ἀλίγκιοι μορφαῖσι τὸν μακρὸν χρόνον
> ἔφυρον εἰκῇ πάντα.
>
> *Prom. Vinct.* 450–58. Paley's edition, p. 124.

On the intimate relation of reason and speech, compare Prof. Max Müller's admirable remarks, *Science of Language*, ii. p. 63.

language, and imparts to it a distinctly philosophical character. It matters not that the real originating influence was the imperative need of mankind, nor that the philosophy involved was unconscious, nor that language is in its primary construction what it is generally termed—a natural product. The fact remains that a process akin to philosophical abstraction of the severest kind is involved in its necessary and only conceivable development.

This will enable us, I think, to understand the position of the Eleatic philosophers. They represent Hellenic thought in its retrospective attitude. The task they set themselves was the unravelling the unconscious linguistic syntheses of preceding generations. Differing from their brethren of the Ionic school, they sought after truth not in large generalisations from natural phenomena, but by analysing the conceptions of the human mind as revealed by language. The presumption on which they based their method was either that language was itself a divine gift, and the source of all truth; or that its origin and development took place by means of precisely the same processes which the human faculties now employ in order to ascertain the truth. The conceptions and verbal abstractions of the past possessed the same interest for them as the fossilised skeleton of a primeval type would have for an anatomist who was investigating the most recent development of the species. The Greek verb 'to be,' for instance, with its various moods and tenses, is of course centuries older than Parmenides; yet, when he wanted an abstraction which would include the whole sum of existence, he could find nothing better than the present participle 'Ens.' Similarly, the unit must have existed from the earliest period of human thought; indeed, it is difficult to imagine a stage of human development so primitive as to be devoid of such a term; yet, when Xenophanes required a word which would serve to typify and express the whole indivisible sum total of existence, he could find nothing better than 'the One.'

No doubt to a modern English thinker, trained in the nominalistic and empirical philosophy of the present and last centuries, this stress upon pure metaphysical abstractions will appear grotesque and absurd. We are, I think, nationally impatient of a process which transfers the reality from the *res*, or sensible object, to the idea or subjective impression of it; and by means of which attributes, instead of being conceived as abstractions, become independent entities, and are thought and spoken of as having an existence prior to any special manifestation in a given sensation. We are almost unable to conceive a cultivated people gravely

arguing on the theory that such attributes as whiteness, greatness, likeness, otherness, were real entities by virtue of possessing which, things became white, great, like, or other. Yet this was precisely the state of Greek thought at the period on which we are now entering.

Nor was this all. These shadowy abstractions were not content with separating, like discontented offshoots or colonists, from the mother-State, but they further constitute themselves into an independent self-existing autonomy of their own; in other words, they assume the title and dignity of the absolute, together with the unlimited powers and jurisdiction implied in the term. Having thus achieved independence, their conduct is like that of other upstart races and individuals—they are eager to disown their humble origin. So far from owing their being to sensation or any other kind of physical parentage, they have, and have always had, an independent existence from all eternity. They, in fact, are the true mother-State—underived, continuous, indivisible. Physical relations, human experience, allied as they are to the actual phenomenal world, are indebted to the absolute for whatsoever they possess more permanent than their own fluctuating, short-lived existence.

You will not, I think, need to be reminded that there is nothing peculiar or eccentric in this evolution of abstract from concrete; nothing that you will not find in the speculations and language of every cultivated people. The process is, indeed, not only natural, but absolutely indispensable for even the smallest advance either in thought or language. Hence, these old Eleatics, with their refined abstractions and subtle dialectics, only traversed a road by which metaphysicians in all ages and countries have been compelled to travel; and, if they built castles in the air, we may remember that there are few profound thinkers, past or present, but have been compelled, occasionally, to find lodgings in them. Probably the main difference between an English thinker of our own time and a philosopher of the school of Zenon would consist not in any divergency as to the necessity of abstract thought, or its utility for linguistic and other purposes, but simply in their opinion of its ultimate reality. The English thinker would remember, in the most ætherial transformation through which he might watch a given abstraction, its undoubtedly physical origin; the Eleatic, whether consciously or unconsciously, would lose sight of that fact. Like two persons engaged in witnessing the performance of a conjuror, one would believe the tricks to be real, the other would know them to be illusory and deceptive.

Now the real bases on which the Eleatics and their successors built their airy fabric of abstractions seem to me to be two.

I. The abstraction is in every case nearer us than the parent concrete; for all ideas, once formed, have their abode and their being in the mind which conceived them. And this connexion is continuous and increasing, whereas the sensations to which they owe their existence are only observed occasionally and accidentally. The idea, *e.g.* implied in the common noun 'man,' or the abstraction 'motion,' is more inseparable from our mental being than are its physical correlatives—a given individual, or a body in actual motion. Hence, the idea claims an existence more complete and perfect in itself, and more indissolubly connected with our intellect, than the passing sensation from which it is derived.

II. The abstraction is not only nearer to us, but it is infinitely more enduring, than the concrete whence it is derived. No idea came more home to the Eleatic than the mere relative transitory nature of all the physical elements of human knowledge. Not only are all phenomena diverse, fluctuating, and perishable, but we ourselves are similarly liable to change, growth, decay, and death. In the noumena, or the universe of mental abstractions, on the other hand, all is stationary, permanent, and eternal. The phenomenon, a white object, *e.g.* co-exists only with my perception of it, or its perception by others similarly constituted. The abstraction, or noumenon whiteness, is independent not only of that or any other particular sensation, but even of my existence, and the existence of all other beings endued with the same faculties as myself. This mode of reasoning could easily be applied to all other phenomena, with their correlated noumena; and thus we can understand how the absolute became to the subtle thinkers of Elea, as afterwards to Plato and his school, a self-existing and independent power possessing an inherent and autocratic jurisdiction, and capable of giving laws to all subordinate, *i.e.* physical, sensations and conceptions of whatever kind; so that, in the view of an Eleatic thinker, absolute likeness, for instance, might be conceived and defined as independent of all relations and particular instances, and would exist absolutely and eternally, though every object in the universe were dissimilar from all the rest.

We hence perceive that abstract thought, independently of its necessity in language, is a protest against the temporary and changeable nature of all terrene experience. To use the expression of Spinoza, it is the contemplation of the universe, '*sub specie æternitatis*;' it seizes those elements in human thought and experience which seem perennial, and relegates all the rest to an

inferior position. That, under these circumstances, the diversity and manifoldness of the outer world of human experience could be melted down into a homogeneous, indifferentiated One or single Ens, can hardly surprise us. Nor can it seem wonderful that thought, with its absolute jurisdiction over the whole sum of existence, should be conceived as identical with it.

This brief survey of the growth of metaphysical abstractions will, I hope, enable you to appreciate the arguments of Zenon, as well as the connexion of Eleatic speculation with that of succeeding thinkers. Zenon's efforts were directed to the defence of the single Ens of Parmenides, and to the denial of many discontinuous beings (or Entia). You must, therefore, bear in mind that we are now moving in a world of abstractions, in which all existences and qualities are conceived and spoken of as unrelated to the phenomenal world, and as possessing a real noumenal existence of their own.

Truth or absolute existence is one, immutable, unconditioned, indiscerptible. Such was the first article in the creed of the Eleatic. Those who denied this axiom, did not do so on the ground of the multiplicity or variety of phenomenal objects. This was a fact accepted equally by the two parties—a fact of which every sensation was held to be a sufficient and incontrovertible proof. The contest was purely metaphysical and supersensual. 'You,' we may imagine Zenon's opponents saying, 'affirm that absolute existence consists of a single Ens, or that it is One. We, on the other hand, say that there are just as many abstract beings as there are separate concrete phenomena. The whiteness of snow, *e.g.* is one thing; of marble, another; of a flower, a third; and so on, for every single object. The region of the absolute consists, in fact, of the ideal semblances or images of our physical perceptions, and there are just as many beings (or Entia) as there are sensible phenomena.'

To this Zenon or Parmenides would have replied: 'Not so. Absolute being is only one. You are confounding two different things—abstractions related to phenomenal objects, and abstractions which are not so related. You think, *i.e.* of whiteness as a quality of a specific object. To me it is a pure idea—thing in itself—noumenon, or whatever else you choose to call it. I have not that faculty, which you seem to possess, of considering these abstractions as different discrete existences. I cannot thus break up the mental continuity I am conscious of possessing—or, rather, which is my sole veritable being—into an indefinite number of parts and fractions. Absolute whiteness is to me a single, indivisible, unchangeable Ens; and to separate the whiteness of one object

from the whiteness of another, or to try to discriminate between the attribute I observed yesterday or a year ago, and the similar or rather identical attribute which I am now conscious of observing, seems to me nothing less than a denial of my personal identity, and plunges all my mental being into inextricable confusion. Besides, I require fixity in absolute knowledge or existence, on its own account. Truth, to be demonstrative and reliable, must, I conceive, be immoveable and eternal, not relatively merely, but absolutely. Fluctuating or changeable truth is to me no truth at all. That which is now true is so fully, finally, incontrovertibly; the bare possibility of increase or diminution implies change and imperfection. Similarly, truth must be absolutely one. Introduce number, divisibility, into its being, and in the very act you introduce the elements of divergency and dissolution.'

Such, I take it, were the main grounds of dispute between Zenon and his opponents, expressed, however, in terms more familiar to ourselves. He denied the principle of manifoldness in absolute existence, as well as the reality of motion, space, time, or whatever other entity or phenomenon that is necessarily conceived or expressed under a discrete, discontinuous aspect.

Let us take a few specimens of Zenon's subtle ratiocination which will show more clearly than any lengthened disquisition the nature and tendency of his thought.

Thus setting himself against the opponents of Parmenides, who affirmed that existence consisted of *entia plura discreta*, and defending the central doctrine of the Eleatics that absolute existence was *Ens unum continuum*, he thus reasons: If existing things were many, they must be both infinitely great and infinitely small. Infinitely small, because the many is necessarily composed of a number of units, each one essentially indivisible. But the indivisible has no magnitude, or is infinitely small—if, indeed, it can be said even to exist. Infinitely great, because each of the many things, if assumed to exist, must have magnitude; and each has parts which also have magnitude. These parts are by the hypothesis essentially discrete; but this implies that they are kept apart from each other by other intervening parts, which must again be kept asunder by others. Hence each will contain an infinity of parts, every one possessing magnitude; in other words, it will be infinitely great. In a similar manner he shows that if existence consists of many discretes, they will be both finite and infinite. In short, each thing in this universe of manifoldness will be at once both like and unlike, both one and many, both moving and resting—a congeries of contradictions the

very conception of which is suicidal and impossible. The antagonism between the one and the many, by which either becomes destructive of the other, is thus shown. A grain of millet dropped on the floor makes no noise, but a bushel does make a noise, and yet there is a distinct ratio between one and the other. Hence if one grain makes no sound, neither in like circumstances can ten thousand grains do so. Pursuing his argument against all ideas compounded of discrete parts, he proves that space has no existence; for, as he argues, assuming that space exists, the supposition necessitates another space in which it exists, and this again another, and so on *ad infinitum*. He also shows that motion is impossible. For on the theory, which he is combating, of absolute discreteness, every line or distance is divisible into an infinite number of parts; hence a body, in passing through the whole length of the line, would have to pass through an infinite number of infinite distances—a thing clearly impossible. Founded upon the same ratiocination is his celebrated argument of Achilles and the tortoise, which, as Mill remarks,[1] 'has been too hard for the ingenuity or patience of many philosophers; and, among others, of Dr. Thomas Brown, who considered the sophism as insoluble as a sound argument, though leading to a palpable falsehood; not seeing that such an admission would be a *reductio ad absurdum* of the reasoning faculty itself.' The argument is this: Let Achilles run ten times as fast as the tortoise, yet if the tortoise has the start Achilles will never overtake him. For assume them to be at first separated by an interval of a thousand feet; when Achilles has run these thousand feet, the tortoise will have got on a hundred; when Achilles has run these hundred, the tortoise will have run ten; and so on, for ever. Here, as in the preceding example, the fallacy lies in assuming that what is ideally infinitely divisible is really infinite.[2] Having thus annihilated space as a discrete existence, Zenon shows that motion and time are similarly impossible. An arrow propelled from a bow, while in apparent motion is nevertheless at rest. For the time that elapses while it pursues its course, consists of an infinite number of successive instants; during each of these moments the arrow occupies a certain space and is at rest. Zenon has other arguments bearing on the impossibility of absolute discrete existences, but we need not pursue them further. They are all distinguished by the same characteristics, and are resolvable by similar methods. But we must not suppose that Zenon himself

[1] *Logic*, vol. ii. p. 389. Comp. Grote, *Plato*, i. p. 101.

[2] Mr. Mill offers a solution which he considers more precise and satisfactory in his *Logic*, vol. ii. p. 380.

was entrapped in these dialectical snares. They were, as I have said, prepared for the enemies of Parmenides and the Eleatic Ens; for thinkers who affirmed that the noumena of the metaphysical world were as various and discrete as the phenomena of the material world. Grant Zenon the conclusiveness of his ratiocination, and there would be in his estimation only one escape from the dilemma, *i.e.* the absolute indivisible being of his master, Parmenides.

It has often been said that Zenon's reasoning is irrefragable once his premisses are conceded. But the concession of hypothetical premisses presupposes, in all serious argumentation, that there is no subterfuge or sleight of hand in the dialectical procedure. No assumption can make valid an argument on the face of it self-contradictory, or that establishes with equal facility the affirmative as well as the negative of a given proposition, and thus reduces human reason to an absurdity; and Zenon's reasoning is open to more than one objection on that score. A Skeptical opponent might, *e.g.* reply to him: 'The Ens of Parmenides will obviously not endure the test of phenomenal existence. The *plura discreta* of his opponents, as you have proved, will not abide the criterion of the ideal world, even accepting your own account of the latter. What then remains? An antagonism irreconcilable by dialectic between the ideal and phenomenal world. In other words, an intellectual deadlock, a condition of unavoidable nescience or absolute suspense.' Nor, with every desire to insist on the ontological and supersensual character of Zenon's reasonings, is his Skeptical adversary likely to forget their real basis. His arguments as to the conditions of the absolute are derived—as, indeed, they must be—from the phenomenal world. The fall of the millet, whether a single grain or 10,000, is clearly that of phenomenal and sensible millet, and the impossibility of hearing the fall of a single grain is a defect of ordinary human senses. The space and time with which he conjures so adroitly are the entities of the name and properties with which our common experience has made us familiar. Achilles and the tortoise, with their attributes, are conceived as inhabitants of our sublunary world. The arrows propelled from the bow are the well-known instruments of our physical experience. Even the word 'infinite' is a term belonging to terrestrial and sensible conceptions, and denotes in reality not so much a positive quality, pertaining to any existence outside of us, as the limitation of our own powers. The Skeptic might, therefore, fairly demand by what right Zenon—or, for that matter, any other idealist—transfers to a supersensuous world the attri-

butes and conditions pertaining to our physical existence. And supposing Zenon to insist further on the indecomposable character of his consciousness, which seemed not only to guarantee but to postulate an absolute One or indivisible Ens, his opponent might fairly object that Zenon's consciousness could not reasonably be expected to limit or bind his own. And even were he to grant that his consciousness, like that of Zenon, was one and indivisible, yet, being numerically and probably in other respects different from that of Zenon, he could make no inferences from it, either as to the existence or character of an absolute Ens.

But leaving Zenon, and casting a rapid retrospective glance over the Eleatic school, we must admit that the essential tendency of its methods is Skeptical. Directly, all its teachers impeach the veracity and, so far as based upon them, the determinations of our reason. It is no set-off to this negation that the metaphysical entity of the One—the absolute Ens—is dogmatically inferred from it; for the negation which thus engenders an artificial affirmation is clearly competent, if need be, to its destruction. Mr. Grote thinks that Zenon did not intend to destroy or bring into doubt the phenomenal world.[1] Whether he intended it or not, he undoubtedly succeeded in doing so. The object of his ratiocination, in common with his predecessors at Elea, is to claim for metaphysical concepts an inherent superiority to their physical correlatives. No one but a Skeptic—at least a man who could shut out from his consciousness the ordinary bases of certitude—would have thought that the problem of Achilles and the tortoise was anything else but a palpable and absurd paralogism. Indeed, I doubt whether those negative ratiocinations of Zenon can be adequately appreciated except by persons who are more or less Skeptics.

Indirectly, too, the Eleatics contributed to the growth of Skepticism by their excessive ontology. The very determination to discover truth not in phenomena but in noumena, accompanied by a disregard both of our personal experience and the consensus of humanity as to the deliverances of the senses, is sufficient to vitiate all conclusions based on such principles. We shall find in the course of our inquiry that Skeptical methods are frequently allied to and made to serve the basis of idealistic conclusions, while these in their turn are no less apt to engender Skepticism. Our test in every such case should be clearly not the conclusions, but the method employed to attain them; and, judged by this criterion, the principles of the Eleatics must be pronounced to be both

[1] This was Tennemann's opinion, which Mr. Grote thinks wrong. See his *Plato*, vol. i. p. 98, note *q*.

Skeptical in themselves, as well as the source of much of the Skeptical idealism current in subsequent Hellenic thought. Their method leads up to, if it does not involve, the Platonic maxim, 'Confusion first begins in the Concrete.'

3. With the Eleatics we also have the first employment of the Greek language for Eristic purposes. Probably no other language has ever been so much used, certainly none has ever been so well adapted to subserve objects of this nature. Itself the creation of the subtle Hellenic intellect, it abounds in synonyms, delicate distinctions and gradations of meaning, abstractions of every degree of metaphysical tenuity, while it possesses a wealth of ant-onyms, contradictory terms, and other weapons adapted for dialectical and sophistical purposes. Zenon was also the first who employed the dialogue form in philosophical controversy, a method of discussion peculiarly well adapted, as we see in the case of Sokrates and his school, for the inculcation of Skepticism. Nor was the ontological tendency of the Eleatics without indirect effect on their Eristic. The assertion of the absolute signification of words, as apart from their derivation or phenomenal meaning, was only effected by a verbal analysis or decomposition between whose constitutive elements disagreements might readily occur. Here, as in other matters, the flesh—the phenomenal—lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. Let us take, for instance, the Eleatic terms: the One, Being, Infinite, &c. We have no difficulty in perceiving how the absolute in each of these words might be brought by astute and subtle intellects into conflict with their relative signification. The method is really the same as that by which advocates of twofold truth maintain their dual position, the Eristic asserts a distinction between the known and the unknown in language, just as the maintainer of twofold truth maintains a like distinction between nature or humanity, and revelation.

4. And this leads me to remark that the Eleatics introduced into philosophical thought the argument that has been more used by Skeptics than any other; I mean the possible antagonism, and hence liability to dissolution, of the different parts of the discrete and divisible, both as to noumena and phenomena. The reasoning that Zenon applied to the successional forms of space and time, Sokrates and his followers, together with Pyrrhôn and Sextos Empeirikos, applied to number, as well as other objects and ideas that were in the least degree discrete and separable. In the works of the last-named writer you can scarce read a page without finding numerous examples of this operation. In short, all the analytical Greek thinkers delighted to insert the thin end of their thought-

wedge into whatever minute crevice—whether in word, thing, or conception—their keen sight was able to detect, or their subtle methods were sufficient to create. The splitting up of such an object, and its consequent destruction, were afterwards comparatively easy—at least, as dialectical processes. When we come to Sextos we shall have an opportunity of examining this mode of reasoning, or, as some would prefer to call it, of un-reasoning.

5. The Skeptical character of the Eleatics, as I have already remarked in the case of Parmenides, is distinctly recognised by all subsequent Greek philosophy. Xenophanes, Parmenides, Melissos, and Zenon are called indifferently Eristics, Sophists, dialecticians, and, occasionally, Skeptics.[1] Zenon enjoys, perhaps, an exceptional fame for vigorous and trenchant analytic; Aristotle says that he invented dialectic; Plato calls him the 'Eleatic Palamedes,' who has an art of speaking which makes the same things appear to his hearers like and unlike, one and many, at rest and in motion; while Timon speaks[2] of

> The great and exhaustless power of double-tongued Zenon,
> Objector of all things.

Taking the Eleatics as a whole, we must, I think, be struck with their singular audacity of speculation. Although standing chronologically at the commencement of Greek speculation, they are already advanced thinkers. The fable of the infant Herakles strangling the serpents in his cradle is undoubtedly true of the mental growth of Greece. The age is that of the child, the prowess that of the grown man. From the point of view of general fitness and human expectation, there is almost a disadvantage in contemplating the future of Hellenic free-thought from the lofty standpoints of these early philosophers. When a traveller attempts the exploration of a new country, it is not always desirable to make his entry into it by scaling some boundary range of hills. Other mountains of the interior become dwarfed by the comparison; the panorama seems unfolded too abruptly, and the sense of proportion and gradual development is impaired. The Eleatic school, on the threshold of Greek philosophy, is suggestive of a corresponding disadvantage. The Skepticism of Xenophanes seems almost too daring and comprehensive; the idealism of Parmenides too sublime and ethereal; the subtlety of Zenon too refined and impalpable. Can, we are inclined to ask, Pyrrhôn or even Sextos Empeirikos rival the former? Can Plato or Plotinos transcend

[1] Diog. Laert. ix. 11, Art. Pyrrhon.
[2] *Phædo* 261 E. Jowett, i. p. 596.

the two latter? The first of these questions will come within the scope of our present researches. We shall presently learn that Greek Skepticism, though a plant of native growth, is the product of various conditions of soil, climate, and surroundings, and hence assumes a considerable diversity of form and character. We shall find that the free-thought of Xenophanes, however remarkable, is but the half-articulate utterance of the free instincts of Greek speculation. The tendencies he thus exemplified are elaborated and assume a more definite form by the labours of the Sophists and Sokrates, while their final systematisation belongs to Pyrrhôn and his successors. Hence, although we enter upon our study by climbing an elevated ridge of speculation, our horizon is bounded at no great distance by intellectual summits which overtop our present position, and from which a different stretch of scenery will disclose itself to our view.

Empedokles.

Passing now to Empedokles—for in our rapid survey of Greek Skepticism we can only touch upon prominent and well-marked names—we find a thinker connected on the one hand with the Eleatics, and on the other with the physical philosophers and the atomists. Though not an avowed Skeptic, there are distinct Skeptical elements in his teaching; quite enough, in my opinion, to justify his inclusion among thinkers of that class by Cicero and Diogenes Laertius.[1] He follows Xenophanes and his successors in inveighing against sense-deliverances as imperfect and untrustworthy. He bemoans the limitation of human knowledge and the brevity of human life. These two conditions, combined with the accidental and one-sided experience pertaining to every individual man, render the discovery of truth, as a whole, impossible. Here are some remarkable verses of his on this subject[2]—

Cramped are the ways of knowledge, through bodily senses diffused,
Beset by many a hindrance, and blunted by many a care.
Hardly have they regarded the span of their lifeless existence,
When swift-footed fate interferes, and smoke-like they vanish away.
They only profess the opinion that each to itself seems likely
Turning in every direction. Thus vain is the boasted knowledge
Of Truth: for neither by sight nor by hearing do men apprehend it,

[1] ix. 73: comp. Cic. *Acad.* i. 12, 44. So Claudian, *de Consulatu Mall. Theod.*:

'Corporis hic damnat sensus verumque videri
Pernegat . . .'

[2] Karsten, p. 90. Mullach, *Frag.* i. p. 2.

No! nor yet by the mind. Hence, man who hast wandered hither,
Refrain from seeing more than to mortal sight is permitted.

Empedokles has other verses on the same subject[1]—

See as much as you can whatsoever is clearly discernèd,
But do not believe your eyes beyond the clear range of their vision,
Nor trust your imperfect ears, except to articulate sounds;
Distrust, in a word, every mode whatever the path be of knowledge;
Pin not your faith on the senses—each thing in its *seeming* is knowledge.

It seems not unlikely that the Skepticism of Empedokles may have been a direct outcome from his physical theories. There were, according to him, four elemental principles—earth, air, fire, and water—operated upon by two rival agencies, love and hatred,[2] or concord and discord. These were primordial and absolute, the sum of existence; for he denied that anything could be originated or perish. It is not difficult to see that this physical dualism, of which discord is represented as the more powerful influence and the eternal source of all the varied activities of the universe, imparted to his conclusions the instability and uncertainty which belong to all dual systems. But Empedokles clearly saw the difficulty of any and every theory of the universe, not only from the imperfection of human faculties, but also from the immeasurable extent of creation. Thus he says[3]—

Since limitless are the depths of the earth and the infinite ether,
How rashly do mortals enounce on such subjects their puerile judgment,
Seeing of the infinite whole, such an infinitesimal portion.

But though the powers of the senses are limited, he acknowledges that the imagination of man is able in its way to transcend those limits—

Sacred alone is mind, and unbounded its fanciful impulse,
Ranging by speediest thought, through every domain of the Kosmos.

He also accepted, as a criterion of truth, a certain faculty which he denominated ὄρθος λόγος, or right reason, by which, as he denies the power of the intellect as well as of the senses to apprehend truth, he must have meant a divine or supernatural intuition.[4] He also agrees with Xenophanes in opposing the anthropomorphism of the popular theology. The Deity he affirms to be invisible, unapproachable, and elevated far above the limitations of form and faculty pertaining to humanity—

[1] Mullach, *Frag.* i. p. 2. [2] Karsten, p. 96. [3] Mullach, p. 7.
[4] Cf. Sextos Empeirikos, *adv. Math.* vii. 122, 123. Cf. i. 302.

To God we cannot approach, nor with human eye-sight discern him,
Nor by truth apprehend him. The readiest path for mortals
To God, is the deep-seated inborn path of persuasion.[1]

Some of his descriptions of the working of the Deity in the universe have a half-Pantheistic sound, though the general tendency of his thought is materialistic. He seems to have carried his deep distrust of knowledge into the region of his devotions, for he implores the gods to preserve him from the presumption that asserts more than is permitted to mortals, and to disclose to him only

What things it is fitting ephemeral beings should hear.[2]

It does not seem that Empedokles carried his Skepticism into the region of human duty, for he says[3]—

Not to some men is one thing permitted, to others forbidden,
But throughout all the wide-ranging ether, and the unmeasured
Light of the sky, one Law is apparent to mortals.

Though, as the words occur in his lustral odes, they may possibly refer to religious duties rather than to ordinary ethical obligations.

Anaxagoras.

Anaxagoras, who flourished about B.C. 460, is noteworthy for our purpose for three reasons: (1) his physical system; (2) his doctrine of reason (νοῦς); and (3) his banishment from Athens ostensibly on the ground of Free-thought.

(1) The primary elements of all things, according to Anaxagoras, consist of innumerable and exceedingly minute particles. Originally these formed, before the commencement of the universe as we know it, a chaos. To these primary particles, by reason of the homogeneousness which so largely exists between them, and their consequent affinity for each other, he gives the technical name homœomeriæ.[4] The agency which educed out of this chaos of atoms the Kosmos with which we are acquainted is νοῦς, or mind, by which title he appears to have understood a certain impersonal spiritual entity, a kind of 'Anima Mundi,' or soul of the universe. The homogeneity of these primary atoms seems to play the same part in his system as 'form' does in Aristotelian physics.

[1] Karsten, p. 137. Mullach, p. 2.
[2] Comp. Ritter and Preller, p. 108. [3] Mullach, p. 13.
[4] Comp. Zeller, i. p. 796, note *i*, and F. J. Clemens, *de Philosophia Anaxagoræ* (Berlin, 1839), p. 25.

It accounts for the specific individual existence of each separate aggregate. Nevertheless nothing in the physical universe is compounded only of the homœomeric atoms to which it owes its existence. For everything is composed of diverse particles, though in each particular case the various and heterogeneous atoms must necessarily be subordinated to the homœomeriæ which really make it what it is.

Such, in brief, is the crude method, a considerable advance, however, on the system of Empedokles, by which Anaxagoras endeavours to account for the similarity and dissimilarity visible in the universe. It is clear that whatever uncertainty pertains to every system of material atoms belongs equally to this scheme of Anaxagoras, and that in the combination and segregation of these particles there was ample field for theoretical doubt.

(1) Nor is this aspect of the system greatly modified by the part which νοῦς plays in the evolution of the universe. No doubt it is an important fact that in this co-ordinating power we have the recognition of an intelligence which is to a very great extent immaterial. The very choice of the word signifying 'mind' or 'intellect' to designate the unifying and designing[1] power in the universe was itself a most important circumstance. Few ideas in the early history of Greek philosophy have been more influential than the νοῦς of Anaxagoras. Subsequent writers, as Plato, Aristotle, Sextos Empeirikos, were clearly justified in interpreting it into the conceptions and language of the people as God. No other idea or name would have served to mark so well the functions and attributes ascribed to it by Anaxagoras. At the same time the distinction he makes between this entity and material substances is rather of degree than of kind. Of spirit apart from all material qualifications Anaxagoras evidently had but a faint and indistinct notion. There is, moreover, a further consideration

[1] Mr. Grote, it is true, denies this designing faculty. The νοῦς of Anaxagoras he defines as 'a special and separate agency for eliciting positive movement and development out of the negative and stationary chaos . . . It introduces order and symmetry into nature simply by stirring up rotatory motion in the inert mass . . .' He adds, 'νοῦς only *knows* these phenomena as and when they occur.' But this limitation of the functions of νοῦς is not borne out by the Fragments, which repeatedly state that νοῦς knows all things. Anaxagoras undoubtedly took his idea from the operations of the intellectual volition of man, and did not conceive it as a blind instinct or purposeless energy. This fact remains entirely unaffected by what is equally true, viz. that he describes the constitution of νοῦς in materialistic terminology. But this is no more than a crude attempt to define spirit. Cf. Grote, *Plato*, i. pp. 56, 57.

as to the effect which this rudimentary metaphysic had on subsequent Hellenic thought. It introduced a dualism different in form, it is true, from the 'love' and 'hatred' of Empedokles, but not dissimilar in its skeptical implication. The action and reaction of νοῦς and the material atoms soon became defined as the antagonism of mind and matter, a fruitful source, as we shall find in our survey of other Greek thinkers, of opposing theories, and of the skeptical suspense engendered by them; as well as a starting-point for reliance on mind and its processes, itself also pregnant with skeptical issues.[1]

(3) As regards his own views, the partial skepticism of Anaxagoras is shown by his denial of the senses, and his opposition to the popular theology. If we are to believe Sextos Empeirikos, he carried this denial of the trustworthiness of phenomena to an extravagant excess. He denied, *e.g.*, the validity of visual sensation in the case of colour, for even supposing two colours only, black and white, existed, they could be made to merge by gradation of shades into each other, whence he drew the startling inference that white was in reality indistinguishable from black.[2] He is also the traditional author of the argument, perhaps I ought to call it sophism, so often used by all the great Hellenic Skeptics from Pyrrhòn to Sextos, viz. 'Snow is not white but black, for snow is water and water is black.'[3] If this piece of ratiocination be truly assigned to Anaxagoras, I think there can be little doubt as to his skepticism. None but a genuine Skeptic could have conceived or enounced it.[4] It is quite possible, however, that his distrust of the senses may have been unduly magnified by the Skeptics, for he is also credited with a wise remark not altogether in harmony with such a feeling, viz. 'Phenomena are the criteria of our apprehension of things unseen,'[5] not that the attempted combination of such incompatibilities is quite unique in the history of Skepticism.

But whatever aspect Anaxagoras may have for us, there is no doubt that he was regarded, both by contemporaries and succeed-

[1] Comp. Prantl. *Übersicht der Griechisch-Römischen Philosophie*, p. 41.

[2] Sext. Emp. *adv. Math.* vii. 90. Ritter and Preller, p. 32.

[3] Sext. Emp. *adv. Math.* vii. 91–140. Comp., on the argument, Grote (*Plato*, i. p. 61, note *x*), who says all that can be said for its validity.

[4] Grote thinks he impugned the evidence of the senses taken by themselves without the discriminating and controlling effort of Intelligence. *Plato*, i. p. 61.

[5] Sext. Emp. *adv. Math.* vii. 140. τῆς μὲν τῶν ἀδήλων καταλήψεως τὰ φαινόμενα (εἶναι κριτήρια). This is the first form in Hellenic thought of the truth expressed in the later well-known apophthegm—'Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius in sensu.'

ing thinkers, as a Skeptic and an atheist. He carried forward that direction of thought, initiated by Xenophanes, which endeavoured to resolve the divinities of the Greek Pantheon into material beings. Thus he is said to have affirmed that the sun was nothing else but an enormous fiery stone, and that the moon was like the earth. To the devout and conservative Greek of the time of Perikles no propositions could have been more impious; and that wise and enlightened statesman, who was himself suspected of sharing the free-thinking of his friend, recommended Anaxagoras to leave Athens. He adopted the advice, and by so doing deprived the martyrology of Hellenic free-thought of a victim prior to the great sacrifice of Sokrates. Subsequent tradition has ascribed to Anaxagoras a preponderating share in the intellectual formation of some of the foremost free-thinkers of his age. Besides Perikles, he was said to have influenced to a greater or less extent Sokrates and Euripides, the most popular thinker and dramatist of his time. Assuming this to be true, we must attribute to Anaxagoras an influential position in the development of Hellenic Skepticism.

Herakleitos.

Herakleitos is a thinker belonging to our subject in a new and interesting manner. He is a representative—unique in Greek philosophy—of the doubt engendered, not so much by the imperfection of human faculties, nor by the objective uncertainty of phenomena considered in themselves, as by the fugitive, evanescent character of all existing things. This mode of conception is so thoroughly Oriental that one might suppose it to have been suggested to him by some foreign influence; but the only trace of this in his personal history is the tradition mentioned by Suidas that he had a Pythagorean teacher.[1] He is also unique in Hellenic thought for the dark enigmatical character of his utterances, and has hence acquired the epithet of obscure, or, more literally, 'the Tenebrous.'

The mass of mankind, according to Herakleitos,[2] have no perception of truth regarded as an eternal entity separated from all other things. Even daily occurrences are strange to men. The path by which they go is hidden from them. What they do when awake (alluding probably to mechanical habit) they forget as if

[1] There are traces of Pythagorean influence in *Frag.* xvii. cxxxviii. (Bywater), though elsewhere Herakleitos praises Pythagoras for much knowledge, but thinks he had a bad method. Comp. Mullach, p. 316.

[2] Comp. Zeller, i. p. 528.

they had done it in sleep. Truth appears to them as something incredible. They are deaf to it even when they hear it.[1] To the ass corn is dearer than gold, and the dog barks at every stranger. Equally incapable of hearing and speaking what is true, they would do best to hide their ignorance; but, foolish as they are, they follow the rhapsodies of singers, and employ the crowd as a teacher, not reflecting that many are the evil, few the good. The best of mortals are distinguished from the rest by imperishable fame, while the majority of men pass away like cattle.[2]

The senses as the avenues of human knowledge are a main cause of its illusory nature. Eyes and ears are false witnesses, though of the two the former are the most untrustworthy. The wise man, however, occupies himself with the unseen, cautiously employing the visible as a means of attaining it. 'The harmony of the unseen, he says, is better than that of the seen.'[3] As the senses are thus depreciated, the ordinary reason dependent on their testimony is similarly invalidated. He even denied that men in general were partakers of True Reason, but said they were only gifted with intelligence as to their physical surroundings.[4] On the other hand, True Reason is a kind of divine inspiration pertaining only to the few who are wise, and which is conversant with Invisible Truths. To this higher reason the contradictions that seem so incredible and self-destructive are both explicable and natural. This diviner intellect is not the same as and is not attained by vast erudition, for then it would have been possessed by Hesiod and others. Perhaps it is in relation to these two different kinds of reason considered as stages in his own intellectual career that we must interpret the saying ascribed to him—'In his youth he professed to know nothing, but in his maturity he knew everything'; though it is difficult to suppose, from the general character of his *dicta*, that the latter proposition could have been anything but the ironical, tenebrous form in which so many of his utterances are veiled.[5]

But the real reason of the uncertainty pervading all human opinions and judgments is found in the passing and changeful character of the universe with all its contents. From this experience no human reason of whatever kind is exempt. Of this truth his well-known type and illustration is the ever-flowing river,—'Into the same river we go down and do not go down, for

[1] *Frag.* Bywater, iii. [2] Bywater, cxi. [3] Bywater, xlvii.

[4] Sext. Emp. *adv. Math.* vii. 129, 349; and viii. 286.

[5] Comp., *e.g.* the remarkable aphorism (Bywater, lxxi.): *ψυχῆς πείρατα οὐκ ἂν ἐξεύροιο πᾶσαν ἐπιπορευόμενος ὁδόν.*

into the same river no man can enter twice,' is one of his apophthegms couched in the enigmatical terms befitting the Tenebrous Teacher. No moment of time, no special condition of space, or space-occupying objects, is precisely and in all points like that which preceded or followed. The law of the universe, determined by a stern, unbending Necessity, is motion, activity, and mutation. Nature abhors a stagnation which is tantamount to non-existence. Hence the universe is not to be described as it was by the Eleatic thinkers as 'Being,' but as 'Becoming.' Being or Permanence is only the false illusive appearance presented to us by the 'Becoming.' As distinct from 'Becoming,' 'Being' and 'Not-Being' are equivalent to each other, for both are Negatives of it. This eternal process, itself invisible except to the highest reason, is symbolised in different ways and illustrated by a wealth of imagery. It is the invisible harmony which we have just seen is better than the visible. The Thought that guides all through all—the word or Reason of the universe—the one wisdom—Time—Fate—Righteousness—the name of Zeus.[1] But this principle of Eternal Flux possesses no element of fixity which could give it claim to rank as a dogmatic truth; on the other hand, it is the perpetually operating cause of a discontinuity that involves all the operations of Nature in a ceaseless Dualism. Hence it comes that opposite conditions are not in reality and apperceived by the highest reason, the irreconcilable contradictions Dialectic pronounces them. Every state induces inevitably, and is the necessary correlative and complement of, its opposite. Thus, out of Life comes Death, generation causes corruption, and corruption induces new life. Rest is the cause of motion, and motion produces rest. So far from stagnation being Nature's rule, there is a perpetual instability—a warfare of contradictions, out of which are evolved Law, Process, Harmony. Nor is this Eternal contrariety a mere metaphysical or verbal juggle; it is derived directly from the contemplation of Nature, all of whose operations may be described as dual. Indeed, once grant that Being is Becoming, and the coequal relations and real existence of all collateral and dependent opposites are a mere corollary of that proposition.

It is curious to notice how Herakleitos revels in the juxtaposition of these antitheticals as if he took pleasure in shocking the ordinary conceptions of mankind. This feature is common to him with most extreme Skeptics, and is, no doubt, the quality that procured for him the appellation of 'the Tenebrous.' The paralo-

[1] Comp. Prof. Campbell's *Theætetus*, Introd. p. xxxix.; also Prof. Jowett's Introd. *Theætetus Plato*, iii. 316, &c.

gisms in which he indulges, contemplated from a non- or un-*becoming* point of view, are of the same kind as Anaxagoras's proof that Snow is Black. Thus Good and Evil, we are told, are the same. 'Of Life, the name is Life, but the reality is death,'[1] and *vice versâ*, of Death, the name is Death, but the reality is life.' The last complemental proposition, though not found *totidem verbis* among Herakleitos's recorded sayings,[2] is clearly implied in the following most enigmatical of all his occult utterances: 'The immortals are mortal, mortals are immortal. The former living the death of the latter, the latter dying the life of the former'[3]—a sentence which, on the assumption of pre-existence and immortality for all rational Beings, is not absolutely devoid of meaning. Of similar import as an antinomy is—'The path upwards and downwards is one and the same.' Perhaps the illustrations which best enable us to apprehend the Herakleitean Flux are the familiar one of a see-saw or two-buckets at a draw-well, when one motion inevitably produces its opposite. It is needless to add that of growth, evolution, or continuous progress in the same direction Herakleitos has no notion.

Fire is with our philosopher the fundamental element in nature, no doubt on account of its activity both as a generative and destructive power, and the physical source of so many of the mutations produced by natural or human agency. He quaintly describes it as the current medium for every kind of matter, just as gold is for every sort of merchandise. The moving power, which engenders the antagonistic directions of the dualisms of the universe, is discord.

I have said that the Herakleitean system is in its essence and tendency clearly Skeptical, for whatever stability is asserted in the eternal perpetuity of his flux is denied by the actual *modus operandi* of that law. A process which entails such consequences as the similarity of being and not being, of life and death, of rest and

[1] Bywater, xxvi. It is needless to point out the similarity between these utterances and the teachings of other religious thinkers, Hindoo, Buddhist, and Neo-Platonic. The parallel passages that will most readily occur to Christians are certain of St. John's deeper sayings, though of course the latter are conceived from a somewhat different standpoint. For similar dicta, see passages collected by Dr. E. Spiess (*Logos Spermaticos*, Leipzig, 1871) on John v. 26–29, p. 142.

[2] But compare Bywater, lxiv.

[3] Literally, 'The gods are mortal, and men are immortal. (The former) living their death, (the latter) dying their life,' words in which Herakleitos seems to have attained the climax of antithetical tenebrosity. For a nother dark 'saying' of the same kind, see Bywater, *Frag.* xxv.

motion, how suitable soever for minds of a kindred subtlety to those of Herakleitos and Hegel, will hardly contribute to a conviction of certitude on the part of ordinary thinkers. No doubt, it may be alleged that the antinomies of Herakleitos are alternative and dynamic.[1] They are not contemplated as fixed contradictory states. But it is clear that this distinction might be regarded as sophistical and illusory. Because black can be brought by successive shades of gray to become white, it does not, therefore, follow that white is black; nor because generation and corruption are processes dependent on and partly conditional, each of the other, does it result that they are not really contradictory. Men have an instinctive—I suppose I ought not to say unfortunate—distrust of a ratiocination which seems to complicate and confuse, and so far to annihilate the plain evidence of their senses. Nothing has done so much to bring Hegelianism into disrepute with ordinary unmetaphysical minds as its starting-point of the equivalence of 'being' and 'not being,' and the contradictions of Herakleitos were not more popular in Greek thought.[2] Doubtless both systems alike served to engender and diffuse idealism as a dogmatic system among minds of a certain class, but both one and the other initiated just as certainly a Skepticism which denied the validity of all sources of knowledge. Hence Herakleitos as well as Hegel has a 'left' no less than a 'right' section among his followers—an appropriate consummation, it might be said, of a system so inter-penetrated with contradictions. If, therefore, Plato's idealising intellect caught up and elaborated Herakleitean ideas, and gave them a fresher and firmer starting-point in Hellenic speculation, the analytical and Skeptical mind of Ainesidemos was brought by means of them to embrace the completest unbelief; while they also formed the probable basis of the Skepticism of Protagoras and the Cyrenaics.[3] Herakleitos brings even Deity within the scope of his antinomies. According to him, 'God is day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, satiety and hunger.' This is the impersonal many-sided object of worship

[1] Comp. Prof. Jowett, Introd. to *Theætetus*, *Plato*, i. 474 (first edition), and Zeller's exhaustive note to Herakleitos's denial of the logical principle of contradiction, *Gesch.* i. p. 545, note.

[2] On the relation between Herakleitos and Hegel, see the exhaustive monograph of Lassalle, *Die Philosophie Herakleitus des Dunkeln*, 1858. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über der Gesch. d. Phil.* (Werke, xiii.), p. 305, and for English readers Schwegler, *Hist. of Philosophy*, translated by Dr. Stirling, p. 20.

[3] Comp. Prof. Campbell, *Theætetus*, xlv.

which he offers to the Greeks instead of the mythological deities of Homer and Hesiod. One cannot help being reminded by this definition of the antithetical method of describing the divine qualities which is common to all deep devotional feeling, and which unites thinkers so widely diverse in race, country, and religion as Herakleitos, Plotinos, Augustine, Aquinas, Giordano Bruno, and Vanini.[1] At the same time it is somewhat difficult to discern at first sight the province of action thus attributed to Deity by Herakleitos. For with his elemental principle of fire, and his energising principles of war and discord, he might on purely physical grounds have been supposed, like the French astronomer, exempt from 'the need of that hypothesis.' But notwithstanding physicist proclivities, there was evidently a large admixture of rationalism and religious feeling in his system, which made the existence of spiritual beings necessary even if they were not demanded as antithetical to physical creation. Hence we must regard his notion of Deity as the universal reason which directs or superintends the various operations of nature, and which thus unifies the universe. He refused to call or to think it 'the one,' in the sense of the Eleatics. To the Ephesian physicist, nature was far too multifarious to be included in the concept of a single unit. The oneness was an eternal flux; the immutability an unceasing mutation. The uniformity consisted in the stately march of apparently diversiform and antagonistic processes—a harmony like that of music made up of a collocation of different and to some extent discordant sounds.

The historical outcome of Herakleitean philosophy in the direction of free-thought is justified and confirmed by the Skeptical character of some of his own aphorisms. His opinion of the senses we have already touched upon. His dissidence from the popular theology has also been clearly marked. He thought the wisest of all the Delphic oracles was the well-known Γνῶθι σεαυτόν. The knowledge of self-opinion or belief he characterised as 'a sacred disease,' an axiom of profounder significance than is apparent on the surface.[2] But though the legitimate conclusion from these and other of his *dicta* would be unlimited individualism, he expressly guards against such an inference. He enjoins due submission to human laws, as indeed for that matter did even Pyrrhôn and Sextos. The distinction between the wise man and the unwise many is that the first follows common reason, whereas the

[1] See *Essay on Vanini.*

[2] Comp. Max Müller, *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 68, note.

latter live as if they held each one to his own private judgment.[1] The saying is expressed with the usual Herakleitean exaggeration of its antagonistic aspects. The 'common law' recommended is evidently of a sacred intuitional kind—a faculty emanating from the divine reason and potentially rather than actually shared by all men. 'The tendency (ἔθος) of man,' he also says, 'is not to have formed judgments, but of the gods to have them.'[2] In a similar sense he says a weak man listens to the *daimon* as a child does to a man, a dictum which recalls—and may possibly have originally suggested—the implicit reliance of Sokrates on the intuitions of his moral and intellectual consciousness. Herakleitos's suggestion that good and evil are the same is to be taken, like his other antinomies, as a protest against the unconditional, absolutely unrelated character of vice and virtue, and a declaration of the dynamic alternation, the ever-mobile gradation, by which the one passes into the other. He has another saying of a similar purport:[3] 'The most beautiful ape, compared with the human species, is foul and ugly; and the wisest of men, if his wisdom, beauty, &c., be compared with those of the gods, is but an ape.' The moral effect of these antinomies on mankind in producing a philosophic calm under the changes and chances of existence, he thus indicates: 'It is not well that men should have what they wish, for it is disease that makes health to be sweet and good; hunger has the same effect on satiety, labour on rest.'[4]

The old tradition representing Herakleitos as the lachrymose thinker of antiquity, and the contrast to the merry Demokritos, is now generally regarded with contempt by historians of philosophy,[5] but there are evident traces in his fragmentary remains of a pessimistic tendency which may easily have been exaggerated by contemporaries and subsequent writers. Notwithstanding all his theorising he was undoubtedly impressed with the infinity of the field of knowledge, and the small produce the most diligent labour of the philosophical husbandman is able to secure. He compared such a searcher for truth to a gold-digger, who, after much excavation, only obtains a few grains of the precious metal. He also recognises the final Inscrutability of all physical causes. 'Nature,'

[1] Bywater, xcii., quoted from Sext. Emp. *adv. Math.* vii. 133. The words preceding this uttterance, *κατὰ μετοχὴν τοῦ θείου λόγου πάντα πράττομέν τε καὶ νοοῦμεν*, κ.τ.λ., bring Herakleitus into connexion with St. Paul, as well as St. John.

[2] Bywater, xcvi.

[3] Bywater, xcix. Comp. *Plato Hippias Maj.* Stallbaum, iv. p. 187.

[4] Bywater, civ.

[5] See, *e.g.* Zeller, i. 526, note.

he remarks, 'loves to be hid.' Together with these contributory inducements to skeptical despondency may also be classed the indirect presumption derivable from the fact that a tendency to pessimism is among Oriental thinkers an undoubted result of the vein of sentiment which Herakleitos indulged. The 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity' of Koheleth, and the perpetual stress on the Mâyâ of the Hindoo philosopher, cannot be characterised as optimistic estimates of existence. I cannot leave this remarkable man without pointing out the inherent excellences of much of his thought. In some respects the system of the Ephesian physicist approaches the speculation of the nineteenth century. Besides minor approximations there is a clear recognition of nature as immutable law, as perpetual movement, and of movement not in a straight line, as some modern physical dogmatists persist in explaining it, but rather in recurring cycles, and by means of various and often antagonistic forces. That such is the normal process of nature and humanity is incidentally confirmed by the fact pointed out by Professor Max Müller:[1] 'Ephesus, in the sixth century before Christ, was listening to one of the wisest men that Greece ever produced, Herakleitos, while a thousand years later the same town resounded with the frivolous and futile wrangling of Cyrillus and the council of Ephesus.' As a free-thinker his influence is strongly marked on the whole of subsequent Hellenic thought, as I have already briefly mentioned, and this irrespectively of the nature of the speculations. Tenebrous as are many of his utterances to us as they were to his contemporaries,[2] it is the tenebrosity not of the night, but of a thunder-cloud riven by unceasing and brilliant lightning-flashes of profound thought, and suggestive apperceptions of truth.

Demokritos.

Hitherto we have seen Skepticism gradually developing in Greek philosophy on the side of metaphysics. The human mind is engaged mostly in self-reflection, in gauging the powers and

[1] *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 67.

[2] Sokrates said of Herakleitos's *Book on Nature*, that what he could understand of it was excellent, what he could not he believed to be equally so, but that the book required an able swimmer (Diog. Laert. ii. 22, lx. 11, 12). Hegel thus explains the 'darkness' of his Greek predecessor: 'Das Dunkle dieser Philosophie liegt aber hauptsächlich darin, dass ein tiefer, speculativer Gedanke in ihr ausgedrückt ist; der Begriff, die Idee ist dem verstande zuwider, kann nicht von ihm gefasst werden, wogegen die Mathematik für ihn ganz leicht ist.' *Gesch. der Philosophie*, i. p. 304.

limits of her faculties, in contemplating the universe as reflected in the mirror of her own laws and methods, with a result dubious and suspensive, if not actually negative. But Hellenic physical inquiry arrives at the same uncertain results from the objective consideration of the facts of the universe. The different explanations of natural phenomena adopted by the Ionian philosophers, from Thales downwards, were found to be as unsatisfactory as the speculations of the Eleatics or Herakleitos, while their skeptical effect upon the popular creed was probably much greater. This is the stage at which the early atomists of Greece come before us. Demokritos may be said to sum up and to complete the materialism of the Ionic thinkers. All preceding physical speculations, the water of Thales, the air of Anaximenes, the four elements of Empedokles, find their ultimate resolution in the atoms of Demokritos. Beyond this point physical analysis and theory could no farther go. Hence, with the exception of some trifling additions, materialism has made no trustworthy advance since the time of its great founder, about 450 B.C.[1]

Like all the Ionic philosophers, Demokritos attempts to make the material world disclose the secret of its origin, and solve its many enigmas. After long and arduous contemplation of the facts and processes of nature, he formulates his conclusions, most of which are still primary axioms in the creed of materialists. 'Out of nothing,' he says, 'comes nothing.'—'No existing thing can be annihilated.'—'All change consists in the aggregation and dissolution of parts.'—'Nothing happens by accident, but all things come of reason and with necessity.'—'The primordial constitutive elements of the universe are only plenum and vacuum.'—'Like always tends to like.'—'Atoms are infinite in number, and of endless diversity of form,' &c.—The perpetual movement of which nature consists is vortex (δίνη), which is set in motion by fate or necessity.[2]

Such are the rudiments of constructive materialism for which Hellenic and European thought are indebted to Demokritos. By means of these and with the aid of a powerful imagination he evolves the Universe together with its numerous worlds from its chaos of atoms. But notwithstanding his elaborate theorising on the subject, Demokritos is fully aware of the hypothetical character of his system. He is as much a Skeptic as a Physicist.[3] With

[1] Cf. Lange, *Gesch. d. Materialismus*, i. p. 15.

[2] Cf. Zeller, *Gesch.* i. 709, &c. Lange, i. p. 12, &c. Ritter and Preller, p. 40.

[3] A recent writer says of him: 'Er war weder Skeptiker noch Physiker,

Sextos Empeirikos, he is the standard instance of a physicist who questions the certainty of all Physical phenomena. All sensations he regarded as pure matters of opinion and common agreement. 'It is opinion that decides what is sweet and bitter, what is hot and cold, what colour is,' &c. The only true entities are atoms and vacuum. To the same purport he says, 'What things are esteemed and thought as sensible do not really exist, the sole existences are atoms and vacuum.'[1] Were a captious inquirer to ask how we can have cognition of atoms and vacuum if all certainty be denied to the senses, he would find that Demokritos, like Herakleitos, immediately takes refuge in a supersensual knowledge. There are, he says, two kinds of cognition, one genuine, the other obscure. The obscure are the following—sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch. The genuine consists of what is distinct from the senses. Hence when the obscure are unable, as in minute matters, to see, or hear, or smell, or taste, or touch, we must adopt the more subtle and genuine method.[2] The signification of these dicta is obvious. Demokritos takes refuge in noumena from the uncertainty of phenomena. From the sensible aspects of the material world he appeals to supposed invisible states by which they are conditioned. Rejecting the crude theories of the Ionic thinkers with Empedokles, he takes his stand on a hyperphysical conception of the Universe. No doubt his theory constitutes an advance on prior materialistic schemes. In view of the multiplicity of natural products conjoined with the identity of so many of their ingredients—in view also of the researches of astronomers and chemists since the time of Demokritos—primitive atoms form a more probable starting-point for a material universe than air, or earth, or water. Nevertheless it is certain that Demokritos did not claim for his supersensuous theories more than a certain probability. Perhaps he regarded his analysis of matter as more full and complete than any Ionic thinker had as yet put forward, and to that extent as having a prior claim to acceptance. At least he never considered it as possessing demonstrable certitude. Demokritos may on this ground claim credit for a perspicacity

für einen Physiker ist er zu sehr Skeptiker, für einen Skeptiker zu sehr Physiker' (S. A. Byk, *Die Vorsokratische Philosophie der Griechen*, ii. p. 173), to which it might fairly be replied that he carried his physical theories and his Skeptical caution so far as he thought possible. It would be well if many a modern 'zu sehr Physiker' tempered his hypotheses with Skepticism. Herr Byk appropriately compares this union of affirmation and negation with the plenum and vacuum of the Demokritean theory.

[1] Sext. Emp. *adv. Math.* vii. 135-39. Comp. Mullach, *Frag.* i. p. 357.

[2] Sext. Emp. *adv. Math.* loc. cit.

which is far from being shared by modern materialists. He was clear-sighted enough to perceive that every scheme that is founded ultimately upon a divisibility of matter, far transcending all methods of direct perception and verification, must needs be beset with uncertainty. Hence we have his Skeptical dicta, 'Truth is uncertain. Man's knowledge is bounded by this limit, that it is far from the truth.' This is partly due to the individualistic aspect of all cognition. 'Of nothing do we know what is really true, but only what is apparent to every man as he happens to be personally affected by external objects.' 'Even though anything seem evident, exact knowledge of it is doubtful. It is also due to nominalism, language and names being only verbal agreements, and therefore no guarantees for truth. In reality, therefore, we know nothing, 'Truth lies hid as in a well!'[1] This judicious tone of uncertainty in matters so immeasurably beyond human means of investigation is apt to be forgotten by the successors of Demokritos in the present day. Because their science deals with matter as an object of sensuous perception and experimental observation, they forget the inherent inscrutabilities which underlie every portion of their theory.[2] But in truth the overweening despotism of the materialist is just as unfounded as that of the metaphysician. Conceive for a moment the materials of the system as propounded by Demokritos. An infinite vacuum or empty space occupied by an infinity of atoms, endowed with an infinity of different forms, weights, qualities, as shown by the infinity of diversiform objects and phenomena in the universe, and is any other determination respecting it conceivable but one pervaded by uncertainties? It is therefore, as I have said, to the credit of his far-sightedness and candour that our Skeptic both saw and acknowledged the haphazard character of his conclusions. Out of this chaotic jumble of atoms and qualities—generated by this conflux of infinite contingencies, phenomena might conceivably have presented a very different aspect from that with which our senses and experience invest them.[3] The necessity by which they are co-ordinated and arranged is merely a subjective requirement of our own. It is the verdict of our infirm senses on the actuality presented to them. An absolute necessity we have no means of affirming. Hence Demokritos's conclusion, that

[1] Mullach, i. pp. 357–58. Comp. the passages collected by Zeller, *Gesch.* i. 744–46, with his notes.

[2] See, on this point, Lange, *Gesch. d. Materialismus*, i. p. 15, and passim.

[3] *ποία οὖν τούτων ἀληθῆ ἢ ψευδῆ ἄδηλον· οὐθὲν γὰρ μᾶλλον τάδε ἢ τάδη ἀληθῆ, ἀλλ' ὁμοίως.* Aristot. *Metaph.* iv. 5, 1009. Comp. notes 1 and 3 of Zeller, *Gesch.* i. p. 744.

phenomena might have been other than what they are, for 'of all existing things each one might exist either in one mode or in another;' and that all our pronunciamentos about them are but matters of opinion, is the only one justified by his principles.

There can, then, be no reasonable doubt either as to the existence or considerable range of his Skepticism. It is amply attested by the similar teachings of associates and disciples[1] as well as confirmed by subsequent historians. But his own dicta, and the relation of his principles to each other, are sufficient evidence on the point. He seems even indifferent to those incongruities of his system which he must have known were provocative of doubt and uncertainty. When, *e.g.* he makes the mind or intellect the criterion of truth instead of the senses, the value of the newer standard is irretrievably impaired by his opinion, that both intellection and sensuous perception have a common origin.[2] Nor is this the only conspicuous gap in his ratiocination. Perhaps in the true Skeptical spirit he was content with setting forth the best hypotheses his limited knowledge allowed him to form on the subject of the universe without being very careful of the congruity of his system as a whole. But though a pronounced Skeptic, the precise nature of his Skepticism is not quite so easily determined. That he was not a Pyrrhonist, a denier of the existence of Truth, is clear for several reasons: his own elaborate physical system, and his reliance to a great extent on reason and intuition, whatever their intrinsic merits, constitute a sufficient disproof of such a theory.[3] Moreover, there is the fact stated by Plutarch, that he commented in severe terms on the Skeptical sophisms of Protagoras.[4] There is also the distinction insisted on by Sextos Empeirikos between the doubt of Demokritos and complete Pyrrhonism,[5] though as to this the extreme scrupulosity of the great commentator in excluding

[1] *E.g.* Leukippos and Metrodoros of Chios, both of whom have Skeptical reputations.

[2] Zeller, i. p. 740.

[3] On the whole subject of the Skepticism of Demokritos, compare Zeller, *Gesch.* i. 744, &c.

[4] *Adv. Colotem.* 1108; Reiske, x. p. 561. Cf. Sext. *adv. Math.* vii. 389.

[5] *Pyrr. Hyp.* i. 213, &c. The main distinction seems to have been that the Demokriteans accepted the οὐ μᾶλλον—a primary axiom of Greek Skepticism—in the sense of a distinct affirmation of the Law of Contradiction, *e.g.* something is A or not A, whereas the Pyrrhonists refused even the amount of dogma implied in that proposition, declining to affirm positively anything respecting either or both alternatives. On the fourfold employment of the phrase οὐ μᾶλλον, comp. Diog. Laert. ix. 75, and Fabricius's note on *Pyrr. Hyp.* i. 213, Kühn's ed. i. p. 92.

from the category of Skepticism every form of doubt not identical in terms with Pyrrhonism is a point worthy of remembrance. Perhaps we shall not go far wrong in crediting Demokritos with the modified uncertainty which will come before us in academic Skepticism, *i.e.* doubt engendered not so much by the consciousness of absolute Nescience, as by an eclectic variety of contending theories, and a definition of the highest attainable truth as a probability only. This is, in my opinion, the standpoint of his physical theory, and it harmonises with his views on ethical and political subjects.

A considerable portion of the Skeptical notoriety which Demokritos has always enjoyed rests on the supposed atheistic tendency of his teaching. The verdict of history on this subject is summed up with his usual trenchant, rhadamanthine terseness by Dante :—

Democrito, che 'l mondo a caso pone[1]—

'Demokritos, who puts the world on chance.' In terms, nothing could be farther from the truth than such a judgment. The movement of the universe he describes as 'Vortex,' its principles are 'fate' and 'necessity.' If there is one thing more than another excluded by his terminology, it is the operation of accident or chance. In reality, however, and from the standpoint of volitional agency, the difference is purely verbal. A blind motionless power, no matter how inevitable its processes, can only be construed to human consciousness and experience in terms of uncertainty and therefore of accident. This is allowed by Demokritos himself in his admitted possibility of phenomena being other than the actual conceptions we are compelled to form of them. His scheme was thus as repellent to the old Greek theology as it is to our Christian ideas. If the Athenians suspected the νοῦς of Anaxagoras, with its half-personal implications of directly infringing the rights of Olympian deities, they were hardly likely to be more favourably disposed to the 'Vortex' or 'Necessity' of Demokritos. Aristophanes only gives utterance to the popular feeling when he describes 'Vortex' as having dethroned Zeus.[2] Nor did Demokritos leave any room for misconception as to his virtual Atheism. He opposed the νοῦς of Anaxagoras as importing a volitional and theistic element into nature which he could not recognise, and he ascribed the origin of the popular theology to impersonation of the great

[1] *Inferno*, canto iv.

[2] Aristoph. *Clouds*, 380 and 828 :—

Δῖνος βασιλεύει, τὸν Δί' ἐξεληλακώς.

powers of nature and to the fear engendered by their operations. That he employs the language of theology to designate the reasoning and soul-like element which he not very consistently discerns both in nature and in man[1] is only a phase of the distinction which he makes between the obscure and genuine methods of ascertaining truth; the soul or reason being itself material, though composed of finer and more subtle atoms.[2]

But skeptical and atheistic as is the physical system of Demokritos, his ethical system is in practice as full, determinate, and sound as could easily be conceived. Indeed the Skepticism of pre-Sokratic free-thinkers, who lived before ordinary ethical conceptions and social regulations were submitted to the searching scrutiny of the sophists and Sokrates,[3] was generally limited to the popular theology and cosmogony. On many points the maxims of Demokritos attain an ideal of purity and unselfish generosity approximating to the teaching of Christ himself,[4] *e.g.* 'Self-conquest is the highest kind of victory'—'He is brave who subdues not his enemies but his appetites'—'Sensual enjoyment produces only a brief pleasure, with much pain, and does not insure the real satisfaction of the appetites'—'Only mental possessions produce true happiness and inward peace'—'Wealth obtained by unrighteousness is an evil'—'Culture is better than riches'—'No power and no treasure can outweigh the extension of our knowledge'—'Moral purity in its perfection is a quality not only of act and word, but even of thought.'—On the subject of virtue he rises to the 'ethical sublime' of eternal and immutable morality. 'Good actions should be done not out of compulsion but from persuasion, not from hope of reward but on their own account.' 'A man should feel more shame in doing evil before himself than before all the world, and should shun evil just as much if no one as if all men were aware of it.' He agrees with Sokrates that to do wrong is a greater source of unhappiness than to suffer wrong, as well as in the opinion of the teachableness of virtue. It is needless to add

[1] Comp. Zeller, i. 755.

[2] A curious outcome of the Demokritean teaching is the recognition of ghosts or shadows pertaining to men—an analogue, perhaps, of the atoms which are the invisible but real constituents of matter. These are semi-immortal beings, some of which are good, others evil. When visible and audible, they sometimes declare future events. Sext. *adv. Math.* vii. 116, 117, and ix. 42.

[3] Comp. Hegel, *Gesch. der Philosophie*, ii. 43: 'Die Athener vor Sokrates waren sittliche, nicht moralische Menschen.'

[4] Comp. Mullach's *Frag.* i. pp. 340–56, and, for an ingenious arrangement of them, compare Zeller, i. 749–53.

that Demokritos excepts the human will from the iron chain of necessity[1] in which the physical universe is involved, and this is not the only instance of a happy inconsistency in his thought. Hence he makes no attempt to find a theoretical basis for his moral practice beyond the teachings of experience as to the highest welfare of man and of the society of which he forms a part.

Some approximation to succeeding Skeptics may be found in the stress which Demokritos placed on *ataraxia*, or unruffled mental calm. He is indeed one of the earliest Greek thinkers who employed in this sense a term destined to become in after-times a skeptical technicality. The end of all intellectual effort, the object of all ethical and social action, is *ataraxia*. This undisturbed serenity of mind, purchasable only, according to Demokritos, by zealous search after knowledge, by high moral purity, by untiring self-sacrifice, is the sole pleasure within the reach of mortals. But although in terms he makes happiness the *summum bonum*, it is needless to point out the enormous difference between his conception of that object and the self-indulgent Hedonism of Epikouros. Consequently he may be adduced as an example by no means unique of the fallacy of the opinion which makes a high ethical ideal an impossibility to all atheists. His own personal idiosyncrasies, so far as we may trust tradition, are precisely those we might have anticipated from his philosophy. Agreeing with Herakleitos in a half-supercilious and disdainful estimate of humanity, he differed from him as to the proper method of expressing his feeling. According to Demokritos, humanity is more fittingly the object of laughter than of tears. Not that the laughter is necessarily derisive, for it may imply merely the combination of equanimity with high animal spirits which would enable him to survey with good-humoured cynicism the ordinary actions and variable fortunes of his fellow-men.

His isolated life procured for him the character of a misanthropist, which was, if we may judge him by his moral precepts, altogether undeserved. Probably his repudiation of all human companionship was nothing more than the single-hearted devotion of all truth-seekers to the object of their quest—

> The last infirmity of noble minds,
> To scorn delights and live laborious days

[1] 'Man is only a half-slave of necessity' is one of his dicta, perhaps akin to the modified Necessitarianism which in contemporary philosophy goes by the name of Determinism. Cf. Sir A. Grant's *Aristotle's Ethics*, i. 103.

—which was common to the great thinkers of Greece. He was called the 'mob-despiser,' an epithet which might probably be applied to every genuine philosopher. That some of his contempt for the unthinking crowd was, however, paid back with interest is shown by the satirical remark of Plutarch,[1] who contrasts his oracular explanation of the universe with his petty definitions of things more within the scope of his knowledge; for while in the former matter his utterances were like those of Zeus, in the latter he was not a whit above the vulgar, inasmuch as he defined man as 'that which we all know.'

Demokritos deserves a high place in the history of Skepticism, especially as being the founder of the atomistic schools of Epikouros and Lucretius, which have always occupied so polemical an attitude to all religious dogmas, and in which atheism is almost inevitably a primary axiom. That the physical theories he was the first to propound grew in elaboration and dogmatic intensity among succeeding thinkers is only what might have been expected. Nor can it be denied that such a development is in its assumed omniscience a deterioration. If we can know but little of the supreme mind which co-ordinated and arranged the universe, we know still less —and every day's further investigation into physical science affords additional confirmation of the truth—the primary material conditions out of which the realm of nature has been so wonderfully evolved.

The Sophists.

In every leader and every school of early Hellenic thought we have discovered distinct elements of free-thought, sometimes bordering upon, at other times involving, Skepticism. All the modes and objects of cognition hitherto tested have yielded the same verdict of uncertainty. This is the common link that connects speculations starting from different points, adopting different methods, and aiming at different results; this the common experience which has clung, like a shadow to its substance, to every dogmatic conception tentatively put forward. Matter, mind, language, religion, have all been tested with a final recognition of incomplete results. Greek philosophy had, therefore, prepared the way for an order of free teachers and free thinkers such as we have in the Sophists.

A similar preparation had been brought about in another direction. Parallel with the speculative advance was the political growth of Greece. This was undoubtedly in the direction of

[1] Plutarch, *adv. Colotem.* p. 1108. Reisk, x. p. 561.

democratic institutions, and a fuller recognition of individual freedom. The supremacy Athens had attained since the Persian war; the prosperity, ease, and rapid development in culture of its inhabitants, made it the common centre for all the thought of Greece, while its commercial energy rendered it the emporium of foreign philosophies as well. Hence it became the resort of traffickers in free-thought, who flocked to it from every side, so that in addition to the varied and prolific harvests of speculation produced on its own soil, it imported whatever foreign commodities of the like kind it was able to procure.

Besides speculative and political there was another kind of progress, which tended to foster as it was itself engendered by Hellenic free-thought—I mean advance in literature. No ancient literature is so devoid of dogmatic aims and pretensions as that of the Hellenes. There is none which is so purely spontaneous and unforced, none in which the artistic feeling so completely preponderates over the didactic purpose, none in which thought-production in and for itself has ever held such a prominent place. All genius is indeed necessarily individualistic, originality is but another name for this characteristic, and freedom is its indispensable condition. As Hellenic literature confessedly excels all others in original power, so is this a proof of its possessing a maximum of free energy and independence. This natural aptitude for freedom is manifested in the very earliest products of Greek thought. We find it in the imaginative wildness of their mythological legends, in the extempore fluency of their rhapsodists, in the varied and copious luxuriance of their lyric poetry, nor is it lost sight of in the more restrained products of the drama. The effect of Hellenic literature, even at an early period of its development, was still further to develop and strengthen the free instincts so profoundly grafted in the national character, and which was being evolved by its philosophical and political growth. Itself begotten of the individualism which marked every Greek thinker, it impressed everyone who came in contact with it with the same feeling of conscious independence and self-assertion. Hellenic literature trained the mental faculties of its votaries in a manner analogous to the physical education of its youths in the gymnasia. For its varied instruction, its diversified scope for reason and imagination, the intellectual athletics suggested by its different questions and literary products imparted to their minds strength and flexibility, just as wrestling with naked limbs gave a muscular power, a combination of freedom with grace of movement, to their bodies.

And this leads me to notice a further cause of the influence of the Sophists, and one in closer alliance with ordinary Greek life. As free teachers of literature they aspired to discharge its athletic functions. The Sophists were intellectual gymnasts. On its intellectual side they represented and administered to the national fondness for athletic contests, trials of personal skill, agility, strength, and endurance. If we bear in mind this analogy —common enough in Greek literature—it will serve to exemplify the idea of education generally current among the more cultivated sections of Athenian society in the time of Perikles, and it will also indicate the merits and defects of that idea. Education then was regarded not as the acquisition of knowledge in the sense of facts, truths, and dogmas, so much as the attainment of methods. It purported to give not the finished product so much as the instrument best adapted for the production. The mind, its faculties and its contents, were subjected to a disciplinary process, or rather series of processes, with the object of investigating its condition, testing and determining the value of its ideas, analysing the methods employed in their formation, imparting a readiness, dexterity, and flexibility to all its operations, and generally inducing a condition of intellectual force and vigour, corresponding to sound health, and a maximum power of activity on the part of the body. In a word, the main intent of education among the Sophists—and the remark may be applied to after-periods of Greek history—was the extreme opposite of modern ideas current on the subject. The Greeks endeavoured to train and form, we try to fill, the mind. They expended their labour on the working of the intellect, we lay stress on its attainments.

No doubt the Greek conception had its merits. Intellectual operations were regarded as living functions. The mind was itself a life, and, *ipso facto*, liable to disordered powers, weakness, torpor, disease, and death. It was not a mere passive addendum to the body, but an independent living entity, though, no doubt, so allied with it that the health of the one affected that of the other. This stress upon mental activity and care in its cultivation entailed further consequences. The mind was not regarded as a lifeless depository of dogmas which it had received but had no power to digest or assimilate. The quickened reason not only accepted and utilised, but rejected and extruded. It not only affirmed but denied, and the latter function was discharged as readily and spontaneously as the former. To this training we owe the large amount of Skepticism that permeates Greek thought, and the Sophists are the direct precursors of Pyrrhôn and Ainesidemos.

In this respect the Greek intellect is unique among the cultured products of history. No other thought presents such a variety of negations, or discriminates with such nicety and refinement the different kinds and methods of doubt. We may indeed find cause to suspect that the persistent and unscrupulous employment of negation affected prejudicially the discharge of the more normal function of receptivity and affirmation.

For I am bound to admit the idea was not without its defects. The Sophists trusted too much to mere training, just as we attach too little importance to it. A healthy body has, no doubt, a wonderful power of self-nurture; it easily assimilates what is good, and rejects what is evil. Given a robust and well-trained intellect, it will discharge, thought the Sophists, its functions in a similar manner; provision against unruly or mischievous excesses is needless. An athlete, trained to use his arms with vigour and dexterity, need not be prohibited from encountering, not human combatants, but stone walls. Similarly, the intellectual gymnast may well be left to take care of himself. We see, therefore, that the teaching of Sophists was not didactic, but agonistic; they did not think it necessary to load the intellects of their pupils with ultimate convictions—religious, ethical, or political—they rather endeavoured to render them efficient in the discussion of any and every subject-matter with which they came in contact.

As there was a defect in the Sophists' method, so was there also, incidentally, in the end they proposed to attain. It is quite conceivable, as a theory—and as a fact it is attested by numerous instances—that teachers might adopt the methods of the Sophists, and show carelessness as to results, from an implicit reliance on the powerful restraints of nature, custom, patriotism, law, &c., to ward off hurtful excess; or they might take a still higher ground, as did Sokrates, and believe in the ultimate invincibility of truth. As a rule, however, they took the lower ground of personal advantage. Thus acting, they yielded, in my opinion, not to the necessities of their mode of teaching, but to the disorganisation, political corruption, and selfishness that ruled in Athens under the tyranny of the Thirty. Hence, intellectual training came to be regarded merely as the requisite propædeutik for success in the arena of life, just as physical training was for victory in the games. Similarly, humanity—social and political communities—were looked upon as objects of experiment and enterprise for the intellectual athlete. His education was the formation and sharpening of certain instruments calculated to work on the masses of his fellowmen. Whatever was efficacious for this object was cherished and

commended, and, on the other hand, all arts and knowledge not directly conducing to it were despised.

But considered in themselves, and apart from all ulterior objects, the methods of the Sophists were, as we have seen, Skeptical. They imparted the education which some of our Skeptics, notably Montaigne, thought best adapted to the progress of the individual and the general march of science—an education embarrassed in its progress by the least possible amount of impedimenta in the form of absolute principles or fixed dogmas. The idea is no doubt open to objections, though I myself think that these are generally overstated. Conservative Athenians alleged that the training of the Sophists, while eminently calculated to form astute politicians or unprincipled dealers, was hardly adapted to train good, unselfish, virtuous citizens. In their zeal for athletic prowess the Sophists forgot that the analogy of physical vigour did not altogether hold good of mental training. The common animal instinct of self-preservation will always hinder the athlete from displaying his science on impossible or hurtful objects, but similar restraining motives will not so certainly prevent a misdirection of intellectual powers. On the contrary, the very same instincts of selfishness may easily induce a perversion of those powers.

Another point on which the Sophists touch closely the development of Greek thought and life is their relation to language. No phenomenon is more marvellous in Hellenic history than the early, rapid, and philosophical growth of the Greek tongue. Nothing attests so fully the profound and subtle qualities of the intellect of those who shaped it, or the methodical character and wide extent of their culture. Its development as an instrument of philosophical thought we have noticed in the Eleatic and other philosophies. Indeed, the earliest conception of philosophy distinctly identified it with linguistic or literary studies,[1] so that the first meaning of Sophist was probably a word-artist—a dealer in forms and modes of speech. But parallel with its growth as an instrument of speculation was its increasing cultivation as a political and social agent. A knowledge, at once artistic and complete, of his language—especially of its oral powers and capabilities—was to the ambitious Hellene the sole avenue to distinction. The politician in addressing the assembly, the private citizen advocating his cause before the dikastery, were both dependent on the persuasive effect of their words. Rhetoric and dialectic were the

[1] On the history of the terms φιλόσοφος and φιλοσοφία, see Jebb, *Attic Orators*, vol. ii. p. 36, and Dr. Thompson's *Phædrus*, p. 278, note.

levers with which men like Perikles, Themistokles, and Kleon set in motion, whether for public or private ends, the feelings and activities of their fellow-citizens. In the words of Ennius—

> Is dictus 'st ollis popularibus olim
> Qui tum vivebant homines atque ævum agitabant,
> Flos delibatus populi suadæque medulla.

Even the philosophic thinker who aspired only to such social distinction as might be conferred by a foremost position in the speculative discussions perpetually carried on either in the public schools and gymnasia or else in private houses, was compelled to study carefully the form, method, and artistic arrangement of his arguments. Nor was this attention to form and beauty of language confined to the more cultured classes; the common crowd that frequented the theatre or the literary contests in the games were trained to appreciate reasoned argument, and to mark by their plaudits or maudits (if I may coin the word) the excellences or defects of poets, orators, and historians; just as their forefathers, centuries earlier, hung on the lips and criticised the utterances of the rhapsodists.

To all these various activities and proclivities the Sophists by their teaching ministered. Originally created by the development of Hellenic thought and language, they themselves served to quicken and intensify the intellectual fermentation that gave them birth. They are, therefore, coeval with the highest stage of Hellenic development—intellectual, political, and artistic—and some of the most venerated names in Greek literature are directly or indirectly connected with them.

It is now agreed that the Sophists did not form a particular school or sect with common doctrines or method, but a profession marked by strong individual idiosyncrasies. They were teachers not only of rhetoric but of all the different branches of knowledge that make up the sum of a Greek liberal education. But their individual peculiarities were so great as to amount to a qualification of them as free teachers. Welcker has aptly hit off both the occupation and perfect freedom from all formal method and dogmatic restraint that distinguished it by denominating them '*freyere Privatdocenten.*'[1] They were free-traders in thought and philosophy. They also carry on that tradition of itinerant teaching which we met with at an earlier age of Greek history. Bound to locality as little as to method and doctrine, they exposed their intellectual wares—like travelling pedlars among ourselves—

[1] *Kleine Schriften*, vol. ii. p. 428.

whenever they found likelihood of customers. Many of them, and especially those who taught rhetoric, came from Sicily, the native home of that science. They spread themselves over Greece, but the more famous of them concentrated themselves in Athens, where they were first held in honour, but afterwards, from various causes, exposed to obloquy, distrust, and persecution. To determine the nature of the free teaching of the Sophists, and thereby the extent of indebtedness of subsequent Greek Skepticism to their instruction, it will be well to examine the 'dictes and sayinges' of the three names most eminent among them—Protagoras, Gorgias, and Prodikos.

I. To Protagoras are ascribed some striking aphorisms, which have become current not only among skeptical, but among philosophical, thinkers generally. He is the author, *e.g.* of the earliest assertion of the relativity of all knowledge, 'Man is the measure of all things, of existing things that they are, of non-existing things that they are not,' a principle which stands foremost in all skeptical ratiocination.[1] It also affirms the ultimate character to the individual of the deliverance of his healthy senses, a truth also admitted even by extreme Skeptics. To the popular theology he maintained a position of suspense. 'Of the gods,' he said, 'I can neither say they exist, nor that they do not exist, for many are the impediments to this knowledge, (*e.g.*) both the obscurity of the subject and the brevity of human existence,' an avowal which is said to have endangered his own life. This skeptical suspense Protagoras did not limit to theology. He asserts that a similar position of neutrality is discoverable in every assertion of knowledge. So he maintained that 'Two contradictory statements might be made concerning everything,' which may be called the nucleus of all the definitions of pure Skepticism from Pyrrhôn to Sextos Empeirikos.[2] He is also credited with the maxim which became the prime article of accusation against the Sophists generally, as constituting the main object of their teaching, viz. 'to make the lesser cause appear the greater.' That he did not anticipate from these maxims, nor wish to induce by his teaching a complete intellectual vacuum, is shown by his remarks on education, in which the idea of definite attainment seems fully expressed. Nor, again, was Protagoras a shallow logomachist, asserting the difficulties of

[1] The maxim has occasionally been made dogmatic, either by taking 'man' in the sense of humanity, or laying undue stress on 'all things.'

[2] Fabricius notes it as a curious fact that Sextos in his account of Protagoras has failed to credit him with this aphorism, of which he himself has made such ample use. *Hyp.* bk. i. chap. xxxiii. Comp. Diog. Laert. ix. 51.

human knowledge without a profound investigation of the subject, for to him is ascribed one form of the beautiful legend of Prometheus,[1] that perennial illustration, common both to Aryan and Semitic races, of the difficulties, perils, and disappointments that beset the acquisition and communication of knowledge.

His depth of thought, as well as his Skeptical tendencies, is also evinced by the tradition that attributes to him the Herakleitean belief in the transitory nature of all things.[2] This was perhaps the initiatory impulse of his Skepticism, and may have given rise to the tradition of his being a disciple of 'the tenebrous' thinker.

It is needless to point out that the chief developments of the skeptical method made by Pyrrhôn and his successors are but legitimate deductions of the principles laid down by Protagoras. His 'man is the measure of all things' is an enunciation of the individualism which is so conspicuous in all Greek thought, and the source both of its unrivalled productiveness and its inexhaustible variety. In passing, too, we may observe that the independence and self-assertion generated by the principle were exemplified not only in the speculation but in the political life of Greece, producing that intense passion for liberty, that cordial hatred of tyranny, which lends a glow to so many brilliant passages in her history. The same principle contributed also to the growth of Eristic or captious reasoning—'the art of wrangling,' as Locke termed it—which subsequent thinkers, from Sokrates to Sextos Empeirikos, so largely employed. For if the only conception of truth rightly pertaining to every man be the particular conviction engendered by his own senses and mental faculties, it is clear that the dictum '*Quot homines tot sententiæ*' represents not an abnormal and exaggerated, but the only possible, view of the case. With 'all things' man becomes 'the measure of all men,' and each unit of the community is a focus of antagonistic and repellent influences to all the rest. Eristic, I am aware, has also another paternity in the inherent peculiarities of all written and spoken language. Indeed, we have noticed its development among the Eleatic thinkers before the promulgation of the maxim of Protagoras, but it is to the latter as a foundation in human consciousness that we must ascribe both its diffusion among Greek thinkers and its general justification as an ultimate truth, however inconvenient its practical applications.

II. If Protagoras is the greatest thinker among the Sophists,

[1] Mullach, *Frag.* vol. i. pp. 132–34.

[2] Sext. Emp. *Pyr. Hyp.* i. § 217.

Gorgias is their greatest writer. By his talents, his polished and urbane manners, his influence, he is able to secure a courteous and respectful treatment even from Plato, the natural enemy of the Sophists.[1] Only a few fragments of his teaching have come down to us. In his work on 'Nature or the Non-existent,' the bare title of which marks the Skeptical tendency of the author, he seeks to establish the extreme positions: 1. Nothing exists; 2. If anything exists, it is unknowable; 3. If it is knowable, the knowledge cannot be imparted. The work starts from the conclusions of the Eleatic thinkers, with which it is said that Gorgias in early life had much sympathy, but is in reality an uncompromising attack on the Eleatic abstractions. To give you an idea of his argument, and incidentally to illustrate methods of reasoning common to all the Sophists, I will summarise its prominent features. Taking advantage of the ambiguity in the word existence which has played such an important part in metaphysics, he first determines that things neither are nor are not, because otherwise being and not being would be identical. Secondly, assuming existence, it could neither have come to be nor not come to be, neither could it be one nor many—where the argument turns on a confusion not uncommon in Greek speculation between the infinite and the undefinable, and on the employment of Zenon's argument against the reality of space as incapable of definition. Besides, if existence were to be estimated by human thought, everything so thought must be real, whereas experience convinces us that the existence of objects is independent of our perception of them. As to the third point, that existence cannot be imparted, this is proved by showing that it is not existence which is communicated, but only words, which can refer only to the perceptions of which they are signs; and even then must have their significations limited by the necessarily individual character of the recipient, since no two persons ever agreed on all points as to their perceptions or feelings, nor even the same person with himself at different times or in different circumstances. This argumentation is noteworthy as an early example of a type of Skeptical dialectic often employed by subsequent thinkers, and which may be found in almost every page of Sextos Empeirikos. It consists in making every proposition the centre-point of two or more contradictory assertions, and submitting each of the latter to a similar process of dichotomy, and then, by the help of certain axiomatic truths, deducing the falsity of each step of the argument. No doubt Gorgias intended by it

[1] Cf. Grote, *Plato*, vol. i., and Thompson's Introd. to *Gorgias*.

not, as Grote thought, to establish the non-existence of Noumena; his Skepticism was of a far more sweeping character. It amounted in reality to a denial of all existence considered as an object of absolute verification and unimpeachable communication. Nor can it be denied that the reasoning is sophistical not only in name but in its unscrupulous character, for the axioms he borrows from the Eleatics, with a tacit assumption of their unquestionable character, are precisely those to which, as an adversary of that philosophy, he had no right. But this, it might be said, is a feature common not only to Greek rhetors, but to all special pleading, whether political or forensic. Passing by the form of the argument and Gorgias' standpoint in relation to it, we must admit that in its last analysis it is based on the necessarily contradictory character of all ultimate truths. The indemonstrable character of existence, and the impassable gulf which divides man as a percipient being from the objects of his perceptions, are facts which are as common to the Antinomies of Kant as to the Skepticism of Gorgias. We may here enumerate, as bearing on the after-history of Greek Skepticism, the following elements and characteristics of its method discernible in the teaching of Gorgias:—

(1) The employment of a dialectic as unscrupulous as it is keen, subtle, and profound.

(2) The juxtaposition of generally accepted principles to their, if possible, mutual destruction.

(3) Distrust of the senses and their deliverances.

(4) A nominalistic estimate of the scope of language, and a resulting conviction of its untrustworthiness in the communication of truth.

III. No teacher held a higher position among his contemporaries than Prodikos, whom we may take to represent especially the rhetorical and ethical element in the teaching of the Sophists. A native of the island of Koos, and probably a pupil of Protagoras and Gorgias, he wandered throughout Greece, teaching virtue, at so much a lesson. The latter feature—surely venial in the case of a man who depended on his teaching for his subsistence—together with a doubtful allegation of avarice, are the only faults found with him. In all other respects he ranks as the wisest and most exemplary of the Sophists, from whom, indeed, he is pointedly distinguished by Plato, on account of his superior worthiness. Of Prodikos's teaching we have two fragments left. These, however, relate to the main theme of all his teaching, the choice of Herakles. This apologue, as I dare say you remember, teaches how Herakles in his youth was accosted by virtue and vice, in the semblance of

two women, each with appropriate dress, gesture, and demeanour; the former of whom sets before him the present glory, the enduring fame and beneficence of a virtuous life, withal not disguising the severe trials and hardships which are its necessary conditions; for the gods have not granted what is really beautiful and good apart from trouble and careful striving. The other tries to allure him to her service by dwelling on the various pleasures, the careless ease, that attend it. Herakles ultimately decides for virtue, and thereby becomes the great but much-tried hero of Greek ethical teaching. The moral of the fable, I need scarcely remark, is not only inoffensive, it is in the very highest degree pure, noble, and disinterested. It would be difficult to find in the Bible itself teaching of a sublimer or more distinctly ethical character. And when the apologue, affecting when narrated in the simplest language, was adorned, as we are told it was by Prodikos, with every rhetorical grace[1] calculated to touch the feelings and excite the passions of his youthful hearers, the effect must have been as wholesomely stimulating and beneficial as any moral teaching could possibly be. Not less salutary were Prodikos's other teachings, if we may credit the reproductions of them by rhetors and philosophers. He agrees with Sokrates that the value of riches depends entirely on the use made of them, and that virtue must be learnt. He also taught the worthlessness of earthly life, and how the good man should long for freedom from the body. Whether, as Welcker maintains, he taught immortality, is perhaps a little more doubtful, though I must confess most of his teachings point in that direction. On the other hand, Prodikos is accused of atheism, in that he regarded the gods not as divine beings but as personifications of the sun, moon, rivers, fountains, and whatever else in nature was beneficial to man.[2]

In the objects of his instruction, though perhaps less in method, Prodikos is a forerunner of Sokrates. Not only are his teachings ethical, but he adopted the plan of taking moral definitions and abstractions as objects of rhetorical disquisition. So he treated of courage, rashness, riches, in a manner akin to that of Sokrates. He probably, however, endeavoured to obtain and to inculcate some final decision on the questions thus mooted, and did not, like Sokrates, leave the result doubtful. Perhaps this is the reason, among others, why he is treated with more respect by Aristophanes than his great successor.

[1] Xenophon, *Memor.* ii. 1.

[2] Sext. Emp. *adv. Math.* i. § 52

In some respects Prodikos must be regarded as an exceptional Sophist. Agreeing with his fellow-teachers that virtue is to be learnt, he insisted not only on the intellectual, but on the exclusively ethical aspect of that discipline. Virtue, the perfection of human action, like intellectual and physical vigour, was the object of exercise, cultivation, and self-discipline. The moral athlete, the would-be imitator of the great Herakles, must, like his prototype, contend and strive for virtue. He must become a gymnast in the arena of human passion and worldly temptation just as much as in the debates of the schools or the physical exercises of the palæstra. From this point of view he remedied what were generally considered deficiencies in the teachings of his brother Sophists, and even of Sokrates himself. On the other hand, the Atheism of Prodikos, whether entire or, as most probable, only partial, connects him with the class of free-teachers generally as the objects of popular suspicion and displeasure. No ethical teaching was so noble, no life so pure, as to compensate in the mind of the vulgar Athenian for defective belief in the gods. Protagoras, as we have seen, urged his intellectual helplessness on the subject. He could not tell whether the gods existed or whether they did not exist, and unfortunately he had no means of obtaining information on the subject. Neither the suspense of this philosopher nor the rationalism of Prodikos were pleasing to their fellow-citizens. We shall see when we come to Sokrates the result of this exacerbation of the popular religious sentiment.

We are now, I think, in a better position to realize the actual position of our free-teachers and the extent of their independence of and antagonism to the religious convictions and customary traditions of the Athenian populace. 1. They represent the decadence of older theological conceptions, and the separation thereby necessitated between religious dogma and the ethical teaching ordinarily based upon or taught in connection with it. We may find precisely similar phenomena in two important epochs in modern history. The Sophists are the predecessors of the free-thinkers of the Italian Renaissance, and of the French Encyclopædists in the half-century preceding the Revolution. In each of these cases the immoral character of Religion and its ministers effected a disruption—temporary in the latter two instances on account of the essentially moral basis of Christianity—between Theology and Ethics; and the establishment of the latter on an independent foundation of its own. In theory, no doubt, the deities of Olympus still retained their supremacy at Athens. The literally *unsophisticated* populace were still of opinion that human right and wrong, and weal and

woe, were regulated by their almighty decrees. How the gods rewarded the good and punished the evil was the subject and plot of most of their dramas. The extent to which religious fanaticism in favour of traditional belief could be evoked at Athens is shown by the popular excitement at the mutilation of the Hermæ. That the Olympian deities were represented by poets and dramatists as liars, adulterers, thieves, did not signify. With an obtuseness which would be marvellous if it were not so common, they refused to recognise palpable incongruities between the religious dogma or worship on the one hand, and the moral sentiment of cultured humanity on the other.

To this disparity the Sophists and Sokrates drew attention, though less by open contradiction than by the tacit and indirect adoption of other hypotheses irreconcilable with it. By the free-teachers the gods were placed distinctly in the background. Human duties and interests, virtues and excellences, were substituted as regulative sanctions for the old Olympian rule. The change was the ethical analogue to a similar revolution taking place in Greek physical science. If 'Vortex' ousted Zeus, as Aristophanes complained, from his material dominion, 'Virtue,' with still more right, it might be said, deprived him of his pretended moral sovereignty over human actions and life. It was already a suspicious circumstance, symptomatic of the change coming over Greek theology, that the thinkers of Greece were now in the habit of referring to the deities in general terms as the gods, instead of designating them as individuals, and so calling attention to the turpitudes associated with their actual names.

But the Sophists not only opposed the religious prepossessions of the Greeks, their free-methods conflicted with their moral convictions as well. The chief Sophists, we have seen, were Rhetors, and with Rhetoric they combined Dialectic and occasionally indulged in Eristic, the captious excess of Dialectic. They taught for pay the art of persuasion, the best and readiest method of securing victory in all kinds of debate. The Athenians could not but see that this art was open to abuse. If not essentially inducing laxity and want of principle, it would undoubtedly do so in the hands of unprincipled persons. Besides, these rhetors came from Sicily, the native land of Rhetoric, and were perhaps, even on that account, obnoxious to the Athenians. Hence the old-fashioned among them regarded these new teachers in the same light as Cato the censor did the Sophistical disquisitions of Carneades, when that Skeptic endeavoured to prove to the Roman youth the identity of justice and expediency. They could not be brought to see the utility of

an art which might conceivably be used to confuse vice with virtue, duty with pleasure, and to prove the worse the better cause. They refused to concede the advantage of intellectual gymnastics for their own sake, or to applaud a rhetorical or dialectic prowess which might be employed so as to endanger the well-being and social order of the State. Men like Anytos and Meletos were far from sharing the robust confidence of Sokrates and Plato in the common sense, the native goodness, the social instincts of the young Athenians; nor were they more prepossessed in favour of such abstract principles as the inherent force of truth, or the claims of Dialectic as an end in itself, or the innate aptitude of the human mind for inquiry and discussion, nor, once more, did they consider that every kind of human knowledge may, in the hands of unworthy persons, be abused. It was enough for them that the liability to such abuse offered by the Sophists and their methods was of a peculiarly seductive nature. Hence the dramatic freedom, the double-tongued argumentation of the Sophists, were as loathsome to dogmatic Athenians as the twofold truth of some Christian thinkers was to the ruling powers of Romanism. This feeling, as we know, aided by political causes, reached its climax in the martyrdom of Sokrates, while the traditional flight of Anaxagoras, the indignation against Prodikos, were less marked expressions of it. Nor can it be said that the Athenians were at all likely to discriminate between the rhetorical and the dialectical arts considered in their probable effect on the minds of their youth. For, although Rhetoric is older than Dialectic, as intellectual synthesis is an earlier mental process than analysis, the end of both is in reality the same. Under any circumstances, as Plato and Aristotle both admitted, the boundary-line between Rhetoric and Dialectic, and between these and Eristic, is in reality and practically of a very insignificant character; for if a man be inveighed to adopt a wrong conclusion and carry it into practice, it cannot matter much whether his feelings have been seduced by Rhetoric or his reason convinced by Logic. In either case, the instrument of persuasion is double-edged, and just as capable of bad as good effects. Perhaps on the score of permanence, Rhetoric might be considered as the more innocuous, in accordance with the old epigram which happily describes their respective methods:—

Rhetorica est palmæ similis, Dialectica pugno;
Hæc pugnet, palmam sed tamen illa feret.[1]

[1] According to Quinctilian, Zenon was the author of this comparison. The epigram in the text is quoted by Fabricius in his notes to Sext. Emp.

But to such niceties the average Athenian Philistine was supremely indifferent. The distinction between the sciences, if he allowed it, would have been between the bad and the worse, a rivalry of ill teaching and immoral consequences. In either case he discerned or thought he discerned in the linguistic legerdemain a potent source of immorality and corruption. His suspicions were no doubt kept alive and confirmed by the more vain and extravagant among the Sophists, who chose the most paradoxical subjects on which to dilate. The more preposterous the theme, the more opposed to the common-sense of mankind, the greater the skill needed to elucidate and establish it. Like a lawyer who boasts of carrying his client through some very difficult case, the glory of the victory was in direct proportion to its *à priori* unlikelihood, in other words, to the justice, reason, and evidence naturally arraigned against it. Aristotle's treatise on the Sophistical elenchi furnishes us with an exhaustive list of the paradoxes the more unscrupulous Sophists pledged themselves to maintain. The effect of such themes on the Athenians might perhaps be illustrated by the indignation excited in some circles in this country on the publication of Mandeville's work proving that 'Private vices were public benefits,' or the excitement caused by the theological paradox of Warburton's 'Divine Legation.' These dialectical excesses are not only reprehended by such writers as Plato and Aristotle, they are also found fault with by Sextos Empeirikos, who bases upon them his argument that the rhetorical, like every other art, is a nullity.[1] But for my part I cannot for a moment suppose that most of those paradoxes with which the Sophists are credited were really adopted by them in good earnest and with a direct purpose to deceive; and much virtuous indignation seems to me to have been wasted on them on that account. I regard these paralogisms, logical puerilities, &c., in the same light as similar playful riddles, equivocations, and quibbles among ourselves. Every intellectual process, like vinous fermentation, will have a certain proportion of good liquor, and so much lees or insoluble subsidence, but no wise man is at all liable to mistake the one for the other. To me at least these paralogisms seem a striking illustration of the astuteness of the Greek intellect, the flexibility of their language, the recklessness with which they

adv. Math. ii. § 8, as one of Dupertus; but a very similar epigram may be found by Audoenus, *Epigr.* ed. Renouard, p. 45. Luther's distinction between rhetoric and dialectic is well known: 'Rhetor sine dialectica nihil firmi docere potest, et e contra dialecticus sine rhetorica non afficit auditores Utramque vero conjungens docet et persuadet.' *Epist. ad Galatas*, cap. 5.

[1] *Adv. Math.* lib. ii.

applied their thought-processes to every conceivable object, and the thoroughness with which they followed up every investigation and accepted every result. No other characteristic could, I think, have been expected from a race possessed with an invincible love of freedom, and a hatred of all restraint. Hence we have the noteworthy fact that it is among that nation of all others which carried mental development to the highest pitch of perfection that we find the greatest number and variety of these mock-dialectics. Nor again can I leave out of consideration the fact that much of the power of Sokrates and Plato, and even the dialectical skill of Aristotle himself, was due to a preliminary training in these exercises. For false as well as true Dialectic contributes to the same object of strengthening the mental faculties by intellectual gymnastics, just as grammar may be taught by the correction of what is wrong as well as by direct imitation of what is right. Indeed many of our Skeptics have asserted that even true Dialectic serves no other nor higher purpose.

But although to the simple citizens, the ἰδιῶται of Athens, regarding the effects of Rhetoric and Dialectic on the minds of their youth, the two arts seemed equally culpable and from a practical point of view undifferentiated, still the passing over of Rhetoric into Dialectic is a distinctly marked feature of the progress of Hellenic speculation.[1] It is also connected with the Sophists and

[1] That the stress on Rhetoric which marked the earlier Sophists was later on transferred to Eristic is a theory not only established, as Mr. Sidgwick has shown (*Journal of Philology*, vol. iv. p. 288, &c.), by Plato's different methods of treating the Sophists, but which receives independent confirmation from the probability of the case. For in the ordinary progress of mankind—considering man as a social and political unit—Rhetoric, the direct appeal to the feelings or the volition, precedes Dialectic, the reasoned persuasion of the intellect, though intrinsically considered the latter comes first. Probably the difference in Plato's treatment of the Sophists also throws some light on the relation of Sokrates to Plato. The original Sophists brought from Sicily the art of rhetoric, and employed it rather unscrupulously to enforce contradictory opinions. But they discovered that their art was soon nonplussed by the native shrewdness of the Athenian intellect, which prided itself on quickly detecting argumentative pitfalls, as well as by that peculiar development of dialectic employed by Sokrates. Accordingly they changed their tactics. Abandoning Rhetoric, at least giving it only the second place in their teaching, they cultivated the Athenian Dialectic and the Sokratic elenchus. So far, therefore, as method was concerned, Sokrates might be said to have been 'hoist with his own petard.' When Plato discovered, probably after the death of Sokrates, that his master's elenchus had thus been sophisticated, he adopted another plan, which, however, differed from that of the

Sokrates, and contributed directly and largely to the development of freedom of Greek thought. The difference between the sister arts was in the first instance one of method. The rhetor declaimed in long harangues, dividing his speeches into carefully adjusted periods, each rounded off with artistic and rhythmical cadence; the whole adorned with flowery language, profuse imagery, far-fetched expressions, under which the pith of the argument was in danger of being lost. No doubt the voluptuousness of the form frequently served to veil the imperfection of the substance. Inconclusive and false reasoning occasionally lurked beneath the ingeniously woven chain of sentences. Redundancy of words was purposely employed to conceal poverty of matter. Superabundant imagery, subtle distinctions, and high-flown language drew off the hearers' attention from the perverse or untrue deduction. Sokrates and his school conferred therefore incalculable benefit on the cause of Greek free-thought by pitting Dialectic against Rhetoric, and quick short questions and replies in opposition to long and artificial harangues.

Properly speaking, the change thus induced was a return or rather an advance to the native methods of the human reason. For in pursuing its inquiries and arriving at its conclusions the unsophisticated reason does not naturally rely upon verbose arguments and elaborate propositions. Its primary and favourite method is catechetical. The questions of an intelligent child are much more direct and pointed than the reserved and circuitous investigations of the disciplined thinker. Its verdicts also are as plain and simple as the subject-matter may permit. Hence Rhetoric may be called the luxury, while Dialectic is the necessity, of the human reason. The latter is the prose, while the former is the rudimentary poetry, of human language.

Further, Dialectic, the creation and outgrowth of free-thought, is also its potent instrument. It is therefore much less adapted than Rhetoric to enforce dogmas and conclusions of a definitive kind. Indeed its operations when unrestricted by dogmatic postulates and foregone conclusions are not so much constructive as destructive. The attempt to enforce creeds and convictions by methods exclusively dialectical, accompanied with an acknowledgment of the infallibility of the process, may at any moment recoil on the heads of those who make it. Like the eagle, those soaring ratiocinations

Sophists more in the end aimed at than in the method pursued. Like his master, he employed Eristic, or a Dialectic indistinguishable from Eristic, for the purpose of exposing Ignorance and discovering Truth; whereas the Sophists in many cases had an eye merely to their own advantage.

and conclusions are liable to be brought down by arrows feathered from their own wings. Hence the finished and unscrupulous dialectic of Sokrates was in reality much more dangerous to Athenian belief than the rhetorical methods of the Sophists, though the latter, as I have already hinted, were by no means unversed in Eristic, or backward in employing its supple and elastic argumentation. Professionally no doubt Sophists were teachers of knowledge, and herein lies one of the few distinctions that separate them from Sokrates, who professed to have nothing to teach; but so far as this applies to the dogmatic content of their instruction, it must have been almost nullified by their free method, and their habit of discussing with equal impartiality the opposite sides of every argument.

All succeeding Greek Skeptics, I might say all subsequent philosophy, adopted this method—the free dialectics, which, initiated by the Eleatics, undoubtedly practised by Zenon, employed by the Sophists first perhaps as subsidiary to Rhetoric, but afterwards as an independent mode of argumentation, was ultimately brought to its highest point of perfection in the Sokratic elenchus. Not only the Sokratic schools, the Cynics and Megarics, but the distinctive Skeptics, Pyrrhôn and his followers, employed exclusively the dialectic found in its fullest development in the Platonic Dialogues. Nor is there, as commonly supposed, any real distinction in kind between the excessive employment of Eristic by the later free-thinkers and its use by the Sophists and Sokrates. The high personal character, the deep moral earnestness, and the fate of the greatest of Greek philosophers have combined in raising a barrier between his method and that of pronounced Skeptics which in fairness cannot be said to exist. Sokrates is as resolute an employer of Eristic as any Skeptic from Pyrrhôn to Sextos Empeirikos. He is just as great an adept at playing on both sides of the argument. He is quite as indifferent to positive results accruing from his ratiocination. Nay, in some respects, as we shall shortly find, Sokrates is a more genuine Skeptic than Pyrrhôn himself.

Thus the Sophists and Sokrates contributed to the further progress of Greek free-thought by advocating and employing a mode of truth-investigation unfettered by dogma and tradition, and unhampered by bias and preconception. The basis on which their method rested, the conclusion to which it tended, was the ultimate supremacy of the human reason and its intelligent procedure over all authoritative and dictated truth. Even if the reason were not infallible, it was more so than any other mode of ascertaining truth; besides which it had the peculiar faculty, like the self-regulative or corrective processes of some machines, of apprehend-

ing its own fallibility. I have admitted that the Sophists were not always free from the charge of self-interest in their teaching. The flexibility of the mind and of its instrument human language, they sometimes employed for their own purposes. The uncertainty of ultimate truth afforded an occasional plea for advancing or suggesting what was transparently untrue. But this was no more, as I have hinted, than the abuse to which all freedom, even the most rudimentary, is liable; the sediment which is the normal product of all fermentation. Some of the leading Sophists may have arrived at—as Sokrates certainly did—the high disinterested aim of all true inquiry—'Truth for truth's sake,' apart from the material gain of money, or the social advantage of definitive and general convictions; nay, even carrying disinterestedness to such a point of self-sacrifice as to remain careless whether truth were actually discovered or no, and solicitous only that their restless mental energies should be employed in the right direction. However this may be, the Sophists undoubtedly promoted very largely the intellectual life of Greece. Both by their varied subjects of teaching and their free handling of them, they helped to widen the range of Greek thought. Their Dialectic and Eristic braced the reasoning faculties of their pupils, while their Rhetoric imparted the rudiments of linguistic æsthetics and good taste. They impelled the national instincts in the direction they had already chosen, viz. the application of reasoned discussion to every object with which they came in contact. In a word, they materially hastened the development of that complete philosophic freedom, that entire liberty of intellectual speculation, which distinguishes all subsequent Hellenic thought. Nor is their undoubted merit in these particulars appreciably lessened by the imputations so frequently lavished on them of indulging in puerile or even dishonest ratiocination. This abuse of their method, even if it were more common than we have reason to believe it, was a fault of less intellectual consequence to the nation than uninquiring ignorance or mental stagnation. It was surely better that the Greeks should learn of Gorgias how to prove the non-existence of all things than to acquiesce blindly in the still greater falsity, the real existence of all things. The absolute needs of nature and of life may be trusted to rectify any excess of ratiocination, they can do little to supply its defect. Of the two, it is better that a man should think himself to be a god than feel himself to be a brute.

The Sophists also have the merit of recognising the position of the human consciousness in the search for truth, and to insist on what has now become an axiom of philosophy, the relativity of all

human knowledge. The maxim of Protagoras, 'Man is the measure of all things,' declared this with an explicitness and simplicity that could hardly be surpassed. The effect of this principle was naturally to separate the individual thinker from the general traditions and opinions of his fellow-men, and to make his knowledge and conduct dependent on himself. Protagoras was thus the Descartes of ancient Greece, the real founder of the critical philosophy. Never after did Hellenic thinkers lose sight of that primary axiom of all thought. Especially did it subserve the cause of Skepticism. To the disciples of Sokrates and of Pyrrhôn, the free-thinkers of Greece, it became the citadel from which they attacked every system of dogma, and to which they could always retire when inconveniently pressed by their foes. If the individualism thus engendered had its inconveniences, these were probably infinitely exceeded by its merits. The Greek passion for freedom had at least a philosophical principle on which to rest, and from which it was never afterwards destined to be moved.

Nor must we omit the services rendered by the Sophists to Hellenic progress by their linguistic analysis and their nominalistic tendencies. They thus exercised a power on early Greek speculation like that which the Nominalists of the Middle Ages exercised on scholasticism. Already there was perceptible in Greek philosophy a tendency to accept words for things. The abstractions of the Eleatics, the physical causes of Ionic and other materializing thinkers, were assuming an influence more potent than their real origin warranted. The enormous development of realism under Plato we shall have no opportunity of noticing. Clearly there was ample justification for the Skeptical analysis, the examination into the origin and etymology of words, the investigation of the relation of language to the human mind which the Sophists initiated. The later Skeptics, as we shall find, also availed themselves of this weapon first cast in the armoury of the Sophists, and found that its destructive powers served them in good stead.

I need hardly add any remark on the general character of the Sophists. The common notion that unconventional conclusions, or an unusual amount of liberty, must needs engender profligacy of conduct, contributed for many centuries to fix on them an immoral character, for which Greek history does not afford the least basis. Happily, the prejudice is now extinct. Mr. Grote, treading in the steps of Welcker, and followed by English and German critics, has established their general rectitude and morality beyond possibility of question. Neither Plato nor Sokrates ever accuse the Sophists of leading immoral lives, nor do they suggest that they were any-

thing but respectable citizens. What small foundation there was for a charge of corrupting youth when adduced against Sokrates, who in this particular is a representative of the Sophists, we shall shortly have an opportunity of considering. In the instance of Prodikos, whatever freedom may have attached to his speculative doctrines, of which we know little, his practical teaching is marked by purity, justice, and self-denial equal to that of any Hellenic teacher, not even excepting Sokrates himself. Thus in parting from the Sophists as the free-teachers of early Greece, we have the happiness of knowing that their freedom, speculative and religious, was as a rule unsullied by any taint of vice, and that the liberty they taught and practised did not degenerate into licentiousness.

'I feel I owe you some apology,' continued Dr. Trevor as he closed his MS., 'for having detained you so long on the subject of the early Greek philosophers, though I did not read you every sentence of my MS.; but we have, as you are aware, determined to prosecute our subject with some degree of thoroughness. After all, the hours we are devoting to a few of the world's greatest luminaries are only what some men give up daily to the perusal of the combined atrocities and trivialities of a daily paper, while a much greater portion wasted every day by many ladies in devouring the inanities of time is of a modern fiction-monger.'

Tea was then brought in and handed round.

ARUNDEL. To be candid, Doctor, your paper was somewhat exhausting. However, we can discuss a few of its salient points while drinking tea, and thus make philosophy our tea-table talk, as well as recover from the repression, lingual and mental, caused by your long essay.

TREVOR. Our best plan would be to keep as close to chronology as possible. My paper, you see, comprehends two schools, Eleatic and Sophist, with an intervening number of thinkers unattached.

MISS LEYCESTER. But starting with the Eleatics, as your paper admitted, deprives us of the real dawn of Greek philosophy, which one naturally looks for in the rude speculation of Thales and the physical thinkers, who tried to find the origin of all things in water, air, fire, &c. In my first

introduction to Greek philosophy, I was greatly impressed by the freshness and simplicity of those efforts. What a child-like idea of the universe was that of Thales! and how pleasant it must have been to have lived at a time when all the philosophers in the world could be counted on the fingers of one hand, and when every new teacher arriving at Athens was welcomed with a zest and interest we are unable to realise! When Zenon, *e.g.*, arrived with his master Parmenides, we can imagine the intellectual excitement produced. Contrast this state of things with the blasé and jaded condition of our present-day philosophy, when all conceivable systems of thought seem quite exhausted, and more or less ingenious eclecticism is the sole originality we can aspire to. . . . You remember how Herder, with the keen feeling of a poet for complete harmony between his ideas and his surroundings, makes his characters, when preparing to discuss the commencement of Hebrew poetry, mount a hill just before sunrise on a fine summer morning,[1] and the exquisitely beautiful manner in which he interweaves the sensations produced by the scene before them with the emotions caused by the first poetic lispings of the Hebrews. I am afraid you will laugh at me, but I have always been so impressed by this poetic fancy of Herder's, and the peculiar propriety of studying the early development of human thought by the dawning light of a summer's day, that I took some years ago my notes on the early Greek thinkers to the top of a rather high hill before sunrise to see if the rising sun would throw some additional light on the subject of Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes, as well as on the early poetry of the Hebrews.

TREVOR. I hope your picturesque enterprise was attended with success.

MISS LEYCESTER. To tell the truth, I do not think it was. Of course I witnessed what, with my associations, I was bound to interpret as a grand physical representation of the rapid mental growth of Hellenic thought; but either the morning was not so favourable as it was in Herder's case, or the contemplation of intellectual effort does not impress

[1] *Geist der Ebraischen Poesie*, Sämmt. Werke, i. p. 35.

one's feelings so keenly as poetry, especially of a devotional kind, or I am not sure that chapter of Herder's did not unconsciously operate as a disillusionizing medium by leading me to expect too much from the experiment. At any rate, I came home with a feeling of disappointment.

MRS. HARRINGTON. And with a very bad cold, you might have added, Florence.

TREVOR. No doubt Herder's is a pleasing conception very artistically wrought out, and sunrises and dew-drops are under proper conditions delightful objects of contemplation. But the freshness which accompanies the dawn, whether of science or of sunshine, and the pleasure it is thus capable of imparting, is due to the fact that it is a season of hope and expectation, and suggests the further progress and realization of which it is only the harbinger.

HARRINGTON. Besides, men with work to do in the world must have full sunshine, all the light in fact they can possibly get, though accompanied by the penalties of weariness and exhaustion. We must advance, as Cicero said, '*in solem et pulverem*,' into sun and dust. That, indeed, is our position in dealing with the Eleatics. As Florence remarked, in reality if not in time, we are beyond the first dawn of Greek thought. The dew-drops and the haze of early morn are past, and the sun of Greek science is high in the heavens. Some of those fragments of Xenophanes, *e.g.* are quite marvellous for their audacity of speculation. They might almost stand for the utterances of a disciple of Voltaire. There can be no doubt, I should say, of his complete Skepticism.

TREVOR. True; and what is remarkable in this early specimen of free-thought—a kind of intellectual fossil embedded in primeval strata but manifesting the well-known characteristics of contemporary living species—it is evidently the outcome of considerable ratiocination. It is not the mere impulse to vent paradoxes or startling utterances in order to frighten timid people, of which Skepties are sometimes and perhaps with justice accused. His *dicta*, fragmentary as they are, are evidently conclusions based upon long and laborious processes. He is not only a Skeptic, but, what is

still higher praise, he is a rational Skeptic, if you, Arundel, will allow that such an abnormal being ever existed.

ARUNDEL. Why, as to that, the union of Rationalism of a certain kind with Skepticism, both in ancient and modern times, is too distinctly marked to be successfully impugned. Indeed, the older I grow and the more I study the intellectual formations of great thinkers, the more I am persuaded that centaurs and monstrosities are rather the rule than the exception. I expect our researches will reveal quite a menagerie of abnormal combinations of this sort. No doubt Xenophanes is a genuine Skeptic to whom every established conviction suggests grounds of dissent just as naturally perhaps as the idea of another man's property suggests to a thief the desirability of its acquisition. In him the Skeptical element outweighs the rational. As to Parmenides, I confess I hesitate in pronouncing him a Skeptic. He seems to me rather a Rationalist, one who would fain make Reason the sole arbiter of truth, and who merely questions sense-impressions or popular opinions so far as they conflict with her dictates. At all events the rationalist element in his intellect is decidedly predominant.

HARRINGTON. The predominance must depend, I take it, on the comparative weight you attach respectively to a thinker's method and his conclusions. That his method was Skeptical seems amply proved not only by his own expressions but also by his subsequent fame in Greek history. He was known to Plato and Aristotle as a Skeptical Idealist, and his very argument to prove the non-existence of motion is adopted by Sextos Empeirikos himself. Besides, he is classed among Skeptics by Plutarch and Cicero. Indeed I think it not improbable that his philosophical influence might have been more Skeptical than Idealistic, inasmuch as incredulity with respect to sensations or opinion is more easily comprehended than such an abstraction, *e.g.* as the *Ens*. I should be inclined to say the same of all systems of thought in which a Transcendental Idealism is made to depend upon processes antagonistic to or entirely dispensing with the ordinary common-sense of mankind. I have no doubt this is as true of Kant and Hegel in our own day as it was of Parmenides 500 years

B.C. Men understand the initiatory Skepticism, and act upon it. They do not understand the ideal and mystic dogmatism of which it is ostensibly the basis. Hence it seems to me that the majority of the disciples of such teachers remain in the purgatory of Unbelief, and are not anxious to look for an Elysium the existence of which their very method has taught them to doubt.

TREVOR. Luckily for you, Harrington, there is no disciple of Hegel here to defend his master, and to repudiate with Hegelian indignation your accusation of the Skeptical tendency of his teaching which is in my judgment duly merited. It will perhaps serve to confirm your notion that Idealism is often allied with Skepticism if you observe how Greek speculation from Parmenides to Plotinos is marked by a twofold tendency to pure abstraction and unlimited negation. Of all thinking communities, Greece has originated the greatest number of Ideal systems, and has furnished the world with most Skeptics.

ARUNDEL. Add the experience of modern German speculation, in which, since Schelling and Hegel, Skepticism and Nihilism have become wildly rampant. But I don't agree with what Harrington advanced a minute ago as to men being less influenced by plain contradictions to their senses than by what transcends their reason. At least it is not true of people unsophisticated by philosophical speculation. Take Zenon, for instance, and the astounding paralogisms which he enunciated. Place before a jury of intelligent men the problem of Achilles and the tortoise, we cannot conceive their being puzzled, as certain philosophers are said to have been, by the clear absurdity of the metaphysical conclusion. They would immediately decide the question by the simple plan of *solvitur ambulando*, as Diogenes the cynic decided it. No other solution could be rendered comprehensible to them. The sophistries of Transcendental logic, like the absurdities of Transcendental mathematics, such men would sweep away like so many cobwebs.

MISS LEYCESTER. No doubt they would, Mr. Arundel; and give them scope and margin enough for wielding their Philistine brushes and dusters, those ordinary non-thinkers

would make short work of a few more idealities you yourself would be loth to part withal.

TREVOR. Well warned, Miss Leycester. Your proposed *reductio ad absurdum*, Arundel, takes the issue out of the category in which Zenon placed it. The actual consequence of pitting Achilles against the tortoise he was quite as well aware of as we are. What he postulated was the *ideal* standpoint of the Eleatics. Maintain as he did the fact that time is infinitely divisible, and as a *metaphysical* result Achilles cannot overtake the tortoise.

MRS. HARRINGTON. To come to matters more within the limits of ordinary comprehension, I wish to ask in what way fragments of such antiquity as those of Xenophanes and Parmenides were preserved so many years before the invention of printing, and I suppose of writing as well.

TREVOR. By oral tradition. The earliest teachers of Greece, *i.e.* of the mythology which then stood for her history, her religion, and her popular philosophy, were wandering minstrels, not unlike perhaps the itinerant students, Goliardic poets, and Troubadours of the Middle Ages, or the ancient bards of Wales and Scotland. Hence the sayings of the earliest Greek thinkers, like those we have just considered, were first preserved in the memories of faithful disciples. With the invention and diffusion of the art of writing these utterances found a better depository in papyrus rolls, which were reverentially kept in the principal temples. Elea is said to have been one of the earliest places which could thus boast of something like a philosophical library. The first literary library of Greece of which we have authentic record was that of Peisistratos.

HARRINGTON. What an interesting place that Elea must have been in the days of Parmenides and Zenon! It was a municipality based on principles of civic freedom, of which philosophers are the ruling spirits not only in speculation but in legislation. Parmenides, *e.g.* was not only the chief of its philosophic school but was also the recognised head of its civil and legal administration, a combination we can realize only inadequately by imagining the mayor of a university town, the vice-chancellor of the university, and a leading

professor—supposing the last to be what he generally is not, the greatest speculative thinker of the age—rolled into one. Plutarch tells us that Parmenides 'adorned his city with the best laws,' and that the magistrates were required to take an oath that they would abide by the laws of Parmenides. The same high position was also held by Zenon, who if the testimony of later writers is to be credited fell a sacrifice to his patriotism and his determination to preserve the state from tyranny. In the history of municipal government I do not know anything more interesting than this early example of civic freedom and autonomy under the shelter of high culture and philosophy. This ideally perfect arrangement has its parallels in ancient Greece,[1] but the nearest approach to it in modern European history is perhaps Lorenzo de' Medici in Florence, and the influence of Calvin at Geneva, neither a very satisfactory example on the score of freedom.

TREVOR. Yes, in those early days Elea might have been called the intellectual capital of Magna Græcia, the name given to the South of Italy. By a curious coincidence, too, the same neighbourhood has produced some of the foremost Italian contributors to Idealism in modern philosophy, as we shall see when we come to discuss Giordano Bruno.

HARRINGTON. Your unattached thinkers, who succeed the Eleatics, I think we must allow to stand over for the present, considering the lateness of the hour. If we except Herakleitos, who represents an Idealism which we shall meet in Oriental

[1] The interest which the speculative thinkers of Ancient Greece took in matters of state and civic polity, and, as a consequence, their paramount influence in their respective cities, is very remarkable. Besides the instances of Parmenides and Zenon at Elea, there are the equally noteworthy examples of Empedokles at Agrigentum, Melissos at Samos, and Pyrrhôn at Elis. Moreover, Thales is said to have endeavoured to combine the twelve Ionian cities of Asia Minor into a Pan-Ionic league, possibly similar to the Lombard league of the Middle Ages, or to that of the Hanse Towns of more modern times. In our own country the chief examples of the union of philosophical speculation with practical politics are Bacon, Locke and his indirect aid to the government of William III., Shaftesbury, Bentham, and John Stuart Mill. On the Continent, the enormous influence of Fichte in the war of the French Revolution, as well as of Gioberti in the Italian national movement of 1848, are unparalleled in ancient history. Cf. Curtius, *Greek History*, Eng. trans. ii. p. 428.

free-thought, their contributory influence to Greek Skepticism does not seem to have been very powerful.

TREVOR. Very true; and as to the Sophists, their method will come before us when we discuss Sokrates, whom I regard as their chief.

ARUNDEL (rising to go). A very doubtful proposition, Doctor, which, together with your overcharged patronage of those teachers, I should feel inclined to contest, if the clock were not at this moment striking eleven.

EVENING III.

SOKRATES AND THE SOKRATIC SCHOOLS.

Ὑμεῖς μέντοι ἂν ἐμοὶ πείθησθε, σμικρὸν φροντίσαντες Σωκράτους, τῆς δὲ ἀληθείας πολὺ μᾶλλον, ἐὰν μέν τι ὑμῖν δοκῶ ἀληθὲς λέγειν, ξυνομολογήσατε, εἰ δὲ μή, παντὶ λόγῳ ἀντιτείνατε.

Sokrates apud Platonem.

'You may dislike philosophy: you may undervalue, or altogether proscribe, the process of theorizing. This is the standing-point usual with the bulk of mankind, ancient as well as modern, who generally dislike all accurate reasoning, or analysis and discrimination of familiar abstract words, as mean and tiresome hair-splitting. But if you admit the business of theorizing to be legitimate, useful, and even honourable, you must reckon on free working of independent, individual minds as the operative force, and on the necessity of dissentient, conflicting manifestations of this common force as essential conditions to any successful result. Upon no other conditions can you obtain any tolerable body of reasoned Truth—or even reasoned *quasi-truth*.'

GROTE, *Plato*, vol. iii. p. 485.

'Dulce mihi cruciari,
Parva vis doloris est;
Malo mori quam fœdari,
Major vis amoris est.'

Old Latin Hymn.

DU MERIL, *Poésies Populaires Latines*, p. 139.

EVENING III.

SOKRATES AND THE SOKRATIC SCHOOLS.

MISS LEYCESTER. A pretty and appropriate designation for this *evening*, speaking literally not ecclesiastically, in respect of the object to which we mean to devote it, would be—'The eve of Saint Sokrates.'

MRS. ARUNDEL. *Saint* Sokrates! Miss Leycester!

MISS LEYCESTER. Most true, Mrs. Arundel! He was so named by Erasmus, who said that as often as he read his life and his death he could scarce refrain from saying, 'Sancte Sokrates, ora pro nobis.'

TREVOR. I must say I cordially sympathise with Erasmus; and if Mrs. Arundel will read, if she has never done so, the Apology and Krito of Plato, I think she will understand why Sokrates has received, though informally, philosophical canonization. But it is not as a saint in the usual acceptation of the term, but as a 'sinner,' that he comes before us. He is the choregus of Greek free-thought.

ARUNDEL. Greek thought, if you like, Doctor; I demur to the 'free,' at least in your sense of Skeptical.

HARRINGTON. On the contrary, I think Trevor is right. The outcome of Sokratic thought is really Skepticism in the sense of suspense, though not in that of negation. He questions not the existence of truth, but methods of attaining it.

TREVOR. You might have said *all* methods of attaining it excepting one, Dialectic; and this exception is on his own showing just as fallible as the rest. Consequently, he is a complete though undeclared Skeptic. That he was not a negative Dogmatist, as Pyrrhôn was, is clear, but he is not the less but rather the greater Skeptic on that account. Free suspense is, or should be, as careful to avoid positive

negation as distinct affirmation. The difference between Sokrates and Pyrrhôn is—the former simply maintained his ignorance of truth, saying, with Montaigne, 'Je ne sçais pas,' or 'Que je sçais;' while the latter went further, and held all truth-knowledge to be impossible—a very different position.

MISS LEYCESTER. I suppose the difference consisted in this: Sokrates was content with the assertion of his own nescience, while Pyrrhôn, sharing the same conviction, made his ignorance an absolute rule for the rest of humanity, which we may take as another exemplification of the irresistible propensity of mankind to hasty generalization.

TREVOR. Pyrrhôn, if he is not belied, went even further than that. He was not satisfied with saying of himself, 'I don't know,' and of his fellow-mortals, 'I am certain you don't know,' but he went a step further and said, 'It is quite impossible that you or I or any being endued with our faculties ever can know anything,' an overweening and arrogant judgment, to which he has not the least right, and which conflicts completely with his own standpoint of professed ignorance.

ARUNDEL. But you see, Doctor, that is precisely the mischief of negation, it does not know when to stop. If I say, *e.g.* 'I don't know,' I feel inclined immediately to extend my nescience to my neighbours, whom I see to be constituted as I am, and to add, 'You don't know;' and having by induction ascertained that all men in the world are similarly constituted as myself and my neighbours, I next say positively, and of all mankind, 'We don't know,' or perhaps, 'We cannot know,' in other words, 'Knowledge is impossible.'

TREVOR. But the same tendency to rapid and unauthorized generalization is just as true of affirmation as of negation. Nothing is more common than for dogmatists of every kind to urge, 'I know and believe certain doctrines in a certain manner. Therefore, you know and believe the same doctrines in precisely the same manner. If you don't, you are infidels, heretics, or fools.'

MISS LEYCESTER. But if both these processes are illicit, what are we to say of the saw of Protagoras, 'Man is the measure of all things'?

TREVOR. We must say that it holds good of the man himself and of his own subjective and individual measure. It cannot be held to condition or determine another man's knowledge or measure, for that in reality would operate as a contravention of the maxim. It is as true of our neighbour as of each of us that he is himself the measure of all things.

HARRINGTON. Your discussion is approaching a point of excessive individualism, which in the ordinary interests of man as a social and political being is much to be deprecated. In practical life, at least, there is no need of pushing individual idiosyncrasies to an extreme which would make all communities and societies mere ropes of sand; and I agree so far with Arundel that of the two excesses, negative and affirmative, the former are the more mischievous, at least they would be so if negation were as normal and satisfactory a state for average humanity as affirmation.

ARUNDEL. But why do you then insist so strongly on the purely negative attitude of Sokrates?

HARRINGTON. Because I believe it to be the only conception of him which can be fairly deduced from his writings; and also because, if I may employ a personal argument, I have a vivid remembrance of the effect of his elenchus on myself. When I studied him carefully many years ago, I could not help applying his proof to other subjects than those he discussed, with the result that I was glad to buy back again through the agency of 'categorical imperatives' what I squandered by means of Sokratic ratiocination and dialectics. It seems to me there are few truths capable of standing before the Sokratic elenchus, when wielded with skill and freedom.

MRS. HARRINGTON. But why, if Sokrates was really a Skeptic, has he always enjoyed the reputation of a dogmatist, and for that reason has stood so high in the estimation of civilized humanity?

ARUNDEL. The very objection I was about to raise, Mrs. Harrington! Moreover, in declaring Sokrates a Skeptic we are going even further than Grote, who explicitly defends him from the charge of Skepticism.

TREVOR. True, but from Skepticism in the sense of determined and absolute negation, which I contend is not genuine Skepticism at all, though it is very often confounded with it. Certainly it is not the attitude of calm suspense which I hope to prove was Sokrates's position. As to Mrs. Harrington's remark, I acknowledge its truth, but I believe the common prejudice to be unfounded. The popular estimate of Sokrates has been vitiated and rendered inaccurate by too much isolation from brother thinkers. Partly on account of his personal character and influence, partly because of his noble death, he has been generally regarded as a unique product, a marvellous ἅπαξ λεγόμενον of nature, who has neither companion, rival, nor equal. This, I think, is the reason why his Skepticism has never been valued at its true worth. It has been regarded as only the ironical mask put on to deceive his countrymen, and expose their own ignorance, but which really covered in his own case the normal amount of Greek conviction both in philosophy and religion. This position I shall criticise in my paper. A further reason for the same fact is the unconscious misrepresentation of him by Plato, who is sometimes inclined to place the idealistic dogmas of his own later philosophy into his master's mouth.

MISS LEYCESTER. So you see, Dr. Trevor, 'Man' is not after all 'the measure of all things.' At least a little man is not the measure of a giant.

TREVOR. Of course, the little man is liable to make mistakes if he thinks the giant's stature is not greater than his own, and does not make the requisite allowance for the difference. On the other hand there is, I take it, an advantage in reducing the intellectual giant, for temporary purposes of comparison, to the standard of his brethren. Take Sokrates, *e.g.* In the history of philosophy he is really the companion of Skeptical thinkers, as he is classed by Diogenes Laertius, and other ancient authors, and I believe no small light is thrown on his intellectual tendencies by the comparative method of estimating him, which I purpose to employ on the present occasion. Indeed, it seems to me that the only philosophical mode of assessing any man's intellect,

and the only true basis for his psychological classification, is to take account of the instinctive workings of his mind, the processes by which he arrives at his conclusions. A reformation is on this account needed in biography, of the same kind as that by which the botanical system of Jussieu came to be substituted for that of Linnæus, the natural for the artificial method. Linnæus classified the vegetable kingdom by affinities of structure, Jussieu by similarities of process, nutrition, and fructification. The former was at its basis organic, the latter functional. Similarly the ordinary basis for psychological classification of mankind is their conclusions, opinions, tenets, and creeds. But the truer method is the processes by which those conclusions are attained, the manner in which those opinions and creeds are evolved. Hence Sokrates will never be rightly estimated until he is compared with men not so much of the same definitive opinions as possessing the same kind of mental habits, tendencies, &c. The Linnæists ridiculed the groups which the natural system brought together. Similarly ordinary biographers and students of Sokrates will criticize my classification when I place him in closest juxtaposition with Pyrrhôn, Ainesidemos, Sextos Empeirikos, Thomas Aquinas, Pomponazzi, Giordano Bruno, Montaigne, Huet of Avranches, Descartes, Locke, Kant, Niebuhr, John Stuart Mill, and, if I may add two illustrious contemporaries of our own country, George Cornewall Lewis and Bishop Thirlwall. What, it will be demanded, is the common thread joining these various individuals of different ages, countries, and creeds? I answer, in all of them is a passion for logic not only as an instrument for attaining knowledge, but as a necessity for mental exercitation! All of them are really Eristics and controversialists. All of them have the dual instinct; to use a Greek word they are ἀμφοτερόβλεπτοι or 'double-eyed men.' All possess an inborn tendency for taking a judicial many-sided estimate of every question that comes before them, and for that reason all are more or less Skeptics. It might be added, as showing that the correspondence between them is not limited to more important characteristics of mental formation, but holds good of the lesser features of temperament, style, &c., they all

share an ironical or satirical manner of criticizing opinions opposed to their own.

HARRINGTON. I suspect your classification is only another form of the division of men's intellects into analytic and synthetic.

TREVOR. Not quite. In the minds I speak of analysis is, no doubt, the preponderating motive, but there is no *à priori* objection to synthesis when fairly arrived at.

ARUNDEL. A contingency which, taking your own mind as a specimen, is somewhat rare. What proportion of analysis and synthesis would you assign as the particular psychological 'blend' that constitutes a perfect intellectual formation?

TREVOR. Well, it is difficult to apply arithmetic to psychology, but I should say it ought to have three quarters of analysis to one quarter of synthesis. In the case of Sokrates, the proportion of synthesis we shall find to be still less.

MISS LEYCESTER. There is another aspect of Sokrates to which I wish to call attention—I mean the state of Greek or rather Athenian society which could have made a career like his possible. I do not suppose that, taking any other European town at any period of its history, we could find an environment so suitable for a Sokrates mission as that which Athens afforded him.

ARUNDEL. You might find many an European town that would have terminated his existence quite as promptly as Athens did.

HARRINGTON. Nay, far more promptly. Sokrates pursued his ungrateful task for thirty years, opposing himself to the firmest convictions and most sacred prejudices of all around him. Even if the conditions of civic life in modern Europe rendered the career of such a strange 'missioner' possible, it would be quite impossible to find a town where he could have discharged his office with so much tolerance. I agree with Grote's comment on the death of Sokrates, that it is the forbearance of the Athenians—not their intolerance—that ought to excite our wonderment.

TREVOR. I think so, too; but our marvel at Athenian tolerance becomes sensibly diminished when we remember

its high intellectual and literary status in the days of Perikles and Sokrates. Welcker justly remarks that in its prime the city was, in reality, 'a little university conducted on principles of free-teaching.' All its places of public resort and many private houses were devoted to lectures, discussions, lessons, &c., on the most diverse topics. Had we lived at Athens in those days we might have come in contact in a morning stroll through the streets with, perhaps, some score of different teachers and schools. Extending our walk, *e.g.* outside the city walls as far as the Lyceum, we should have found Prodikos surrounded, not only by his own pupils, but by a mixed crowd of Athenian citizens, expounding his perennial theme of the 'Choice of Herakles,' and the vanity of riches without virtue. While, in another part of the Lyceum, Euthydemos might be heard declaiming; or a brace of Sophists discussing some moot point of rhetoric or grammar. Returning to the city and entering the house of Kallias or Kallikles, we might have found Sokrates placing some innocent youth, like Lysis or Euthyphron, on the intellectual rack of his elenchus, and watching his struggles with some ironical sympathy and much real amusement. Or going into one of the gymnasia, we might discover Gorgias, a man of noble presence and magnificently dressed, declaiming in periods as stately and ornate as his own appearance and deportment, some rhetorical exercise, and surrounded by an admiring crowd; or entering the schools of Isokrates or Lysias, we might have listened for a time to the brilliant but inflated periods of the former orator, or enjoyed the incomparable grace and simplicity of the latter. I do not speak of the *chefs-d'œuvre* of architecture, painting, and sculpture that might conceivably have arrested our attention at different points of our walk, nor of the dramatic performance of the masterpieces of Aischylos and Sophokles probably within our reach. Confining ourselves to purely ratiocinative excitation, we might say that Athens in the time of Perikles reveals an activity of free-thought, an intensity of intellectual life, unsurpassed by any city, at any epoch, ancient or modern; the nearest approach to it being, perhaps, Elea in the time of Parmenides, or Florence under

the Medicis. What makes the case of Athens so peculiar as well as superior to all the university towns of modern Europe is the fact that those who share its cultured energy are not strangers who come to the town for purposes of education, but the inhabitants of the town itself, who combine with their ordinary avocations the pursuit of literature, art, and philosophy.

ARUNDEL. I suspect the 'ordinary avocations' of the disciples of Sokrates and the Sophists were of the lightest description. Indeed I am inclined to doubt whether the intellectual activity you speak of penetrated much below the circles of politicians and the wealthy—the upper crust of Athenian society. I don't think the artizans, shopkeepers, and agriculturists—the olive-farmers and vine-dressers of the time—would have entered, *e.g.* into the spirit of one of Plato's dialogues much more readily or profoundly than individuals of the same classes among ourselves.

HARRINGTON. I cannot agree with you, Arundel. The average culture pertaining to a community at any given epoch is to be estimated not so much by the intellectual calibre of its foremost leaders as by the appreciation of their works on the part of the people. Judged by this test, we are bound to conceive a high estimate of general Greek culture. The audiences who could appreciate the masterpieces of Aischylos and Sophokles, who were moved by the orations of Lysias and Demosthenes, who approved the sculpture of Pheidias and Praxiteles, and who were capable of taking part in deciding the literary and artistic contests at the games, must have attained a high proficiency in general culture.

ARUNDEL. Still it could only have been the leisured and wealthy classes which gave attention to the ethical and philosophical problems mooted by Sokrates. Among all his disciples, interlocutors, &c., we have no distinct evidence of any one belonging to the poorer classes. His own stress upon 'Leisure,' and his dislike of mechanical occupation, show the general quality of his hearers.[1] Zeller, I observe, calls his auditors 'wohlhabende junge Männer.'

[1] See on this point some remarks in Mahaffy's *Social Life in Greece*, pp. 314, 315.

TREVOR. The affluence and prosperity of Athens after the Persian war were so great that the number of the really poor among its citizens was probably very small; but I quite agree with Harrington that Athenian culture penetrated far below the upper circles of society—and that artists, mechanics—what we should call the middle classes—were often intelligent hearers, if not more, of the Sokratic philosophy. Xenophon, you remember, tells us that besides resorting to the public walks, the markets, gymnasia, &c., Sokrates was accustomed to frequent the studios of artists, the shops of mechanics, the *salons* of fashionable ladies, and wherever else Athenians were most wont to congregate. He was curiously like Dr. Johnson in his love for crowded thoroughfares, in his high estimate of their educational value, as well as in his opinion of the monotony of Nature apart from human existence. That most of the youth whose names are recorded as disciples of Sokrates belonged to the wealthier classes of Athenian citizens is easily accounted for by their greater facilities for intellectual improvement; but that Sokrates evinced any partiality for the scions of wealthy men as such, is utterly opposed to all the ruling principles of his life and character. Indeed, in the 'Apology' he admits 'putting to the question' both rich and poor indifferently.

MISS LEYCESTER. I am eagerly looking forward, Dr. Trevor, to your treatment of the demon of Socrates, and not less eagerly to the reconciliation you will, I suppose, try to effect between his Skepticism and his conviction of possessing within himself an infallible oracle. The legitimate outcome of such a conviction would ordinarily be extreme dogmatism.

TREVOR. But the demon of Sokrates, Miss Leycester, was a negative demon. Its oracular decisions were always 'No,' never 'Yes.' Moreover, it limited its restraining agency to the practical concerns of life, and never meddled with speculation.

HARRINGTON. But I hope, Doctor, you will think it your duty to examine that curious feature of the great Thinker from a professional point of view. Some years ago

I fell in with and read with much interest M. Lelut's work 'Du Démon de Socrate,' which attempts to explain the belief of Sokrates by overstrained sensibility passing into actual hypochondria.[1] Though agreeing with the author as to the genesis of the conviction, I thought he pushed his theory of hallucination and conscious self-deception beyond the exigences of the occasion. For my part I have always thought the protestations of Sokrates on the subject are, like others of his statements as to personal peculiarities, more or less ironical.

MRS. HARRINGTON. But did the work you speak of maintain that Sokrates was really persuaded of his possessing a familiar spirit? The notion seems so curious for the wisest of the Greeks to have held.

HARRINGTON. Undoubtedly. It would be impossible to dispute the mere fact of Socrates having entertained the opinion. The only doubt on the subject relates to the mode in which he held it, and the precise extent to which he carried it. He certainly imagined himself to receive in critical conjunctures, both of his own life and in the lives of his friends, certain prohibitory whispers which he ascribed to a familiar spirit or divine voice, and it seems probable that he attached a supernatural meaning to such intimations; but there is nothing to show that he attributed them to agencies outside and independent of his own reason, intellect, and conscience. M. Lelut seems to think that he ultimately became a kind of monomaniac or imbecile on the subject, and really fancied that he heard strange voices and saw strange sights; an idea which appears to me at least quite unnecessary. He also classes Sokrates with such historical notabilities as Hebrew seers, Numa, Cardan, Swedenborg, Jean d'Arc, Pascal, Rousseau, and others who have deemed

[1] 'Voilà ce qui est arrivé à Socrate. Ce qui n'était d'abord en lui qu'une impulsion irrésistible, une conviction profonde, une pensée de tous les instants, est devenu, par les progrès du temps, mais surtout par le fait d'une action incessante, une sensation externe de l'ouïe, et je n'en doute pas de la vue.' *Du Démon de Socrate*, p. 196. A few sentences afterwards, M. Lelut proposes to explain 'comment Socrate, la première tête philosophique de l'antiquité, a pu se laisser *devenir fou*.' Comp. Zeller, *Gesch.* ii. i. p. 64.

themselves the objects of special divine guidance. As I have said, I regard most of Sokrates's utterances on the subject as ironical. He seems to have been fond of posing occasionally as an eccentric.[1] At the same time he was clearly not without some superstitions. He believed, for example, in dreams.

TREVOR. Well, he is none the less a Skeptic on that account. When we come to discuss Montaigne, Cornelius Agrippa, Pascal, Glanvill, and others of our Skeptics, we shall find numerous examples of an excessive credulity in one direction, compensating, I suppose, for a deficiency of belief in another. My notion of the demon of Sokrates is that it is an instance of the concrete subjectivity not uncommon in profound thinkers. Contemplation often engenders a kind of mystic self-assertion, a morbid excess of personal consciousness, so to speak. How far he really supposed this self-evolved oracle to be divine in the sense of supernatural is a question not altogether easy to answer. The highest divinities in the estimation of Sokrates were truth and righteousness, and he would probably have regarded every true instinct and clear-sighted perception of right conduct as divine.

ARUNDEL. I own I have always regarded it as a striking proof of Sokrates's religious spirit, the internal witness of conscience harmonizing with the external law of divine providence which in reality he seems to have substituted for the divinities of Olympos. We must remember that he repeatedly calls his mentor divine, and compares it to the Delphic oracle, in which it would seem he believed most devoutly.

HARRINGTON. On the contrary, that very comparison convinces me that Sokrates's profession of faith in his demon is to a great extent ironical. His argument is: The priestess at Delphi receives communications from the gods, why should not I? And I would also infer a half-contemptuous, half-ironical sneer at the authorities of Delphi in the well-known story of their having pronounced him the wisest man in Greece.

[1] Comp. the striking and almost incredible instance given by Xenophon, *Sympos.* iii. 10.

TREVOR. There, I think, you are mistaken. Ironical it may have been, but by no means contemptuous. If there was a firm, unfaltering conviction in the mind of Sokrates, it was that the supremest wisdom consisted in nescience; and being fully conscious of his absolute ignorance, his wisdom was a direct corollary from that premiss. How he managed —assuming the truth of the story—to get the authorities at Delphi to side with him is a point not easily solved.

ARUNDEL. For my part, I cannot see why you or Harrington should wish to *ironize*, if I may coin the word, Sokrates's demon out of existence. If it stood alone as an ultimate principle of certitude, its existence might be thought doubtful. But Sokrates was just as firmly convinced of the infallibility of reason and its method. Did he not say that 'Dialectic was the nature of things'? Moreover, he certainly asserted the unconditional obligation of virtue as well as the existence of Deity and a future state. So that if he is to be taken as a Skeptic it must be with very large qualification.

TREVOR. I quite admit that there are incongruities in the thought-system of Sokrates, though, I hope, my paper will succeed in minimizing some of them.

MISS LEYCESTER. I remember being struck with that definition of Dialectic as 'The nature of things' when I first read it. I should suppose there is hardly a more pregnant aphorism to be found among all the maxims enounced by philosophers. Its purport, I presume, is the declaration of the identity of human and divine reason—the assertion of a positive relation between phenomena and their interpretation, between thought and being.

TREVOR. Yes, it is an admirable foundation stone for idealism. Human ratiocination, notwithstanding its proved fallibility, is thereby made the divine plan of the universe. . . . But with Sokrates its effect is of a mingled description. It affirmed in the first place that a man's own reason was his sole method of reasoning—a self-evident proposition, though one on which Sokrates lays much stress—but its well-known result in his own case was a conviction of nescience, whence,

according to Sokrates, it holds true that 'Nescience is the nature of things,' so far as humanity is concerned.

HARRINGTON. I think, Doctor, you are, if not perverting the dictum of Sokrates, at least exaggerating its Skeptical implication. Sokrates's ratiocination must have had some part in his conviction of absolute morality and the existence of Deity, if only by affirming the necessity, apart from demonstration, of these truths for humanity. . . . By the way, it is curious how thoughts in different epochs, conceived by persons differently constituted, tend occasionally to converge. Sokrates affirmed that Dialectic supplied the rationale of human subjective truth (for I do not think he meant to apply it to the order or wisdom displayed in nature). Similarly one of the Schoolmen, Berengarius, I think, said still more boldly, 'God is a dialectician,' meaning I, suppose, that his works were the result of wisdom and prescience interpretable by human ratiocination.

MISS LEYCESTER. I should like some light thrown on that very point—How far does the recognition by human reason of the processes and laws of nature affirm a relation, I suppose I must not say identity, between the reason which interprets and that which seems involved in the law or process itself? Is not Newton's discovery, *e.g.* of the law of gravitation an illustration of the Sokratic maxim 'Dialectic is the nature of things,' or, as it might be phrased in that particular instance, 'Human reason sufficed to discover the nature of planetary movements'?

TREVOR. Most theologians, especially of idealizing tendencies, would say that the human reason must imply the divine, but I do not think this ratiocination either exact or imperative. Human reason might conceivably interpret processes and operations from which all objective reason, considered as the intelligent adaptation of means to an end, were absent. Like an indeterminate problem in algebra, *e.g.* in which unknown quantities preponderate over equations, but which nevertheless admits of solution.

ARUNDEL. Excuse me, Doctor. Your Skepticism is running away with you. Un-reason might interpret what is irrational and absurd; reason itself, never! When it assumes

such functions, reason must lay down its own proper office and assume for the time being the cap and bells of folly. Suppose, *e.g.* the planets had been governed, I won't say by laws but by impulses fitful, wayward, and irregular, would Newton's reason or any other man's have been competent to interpret their motions? As for your mathematical illustration, it is against you, for the solutions of indeterminate problems may be numberless.

TREVOR. Do you then deny that reason in the case of 'Mad-doctors,' as they are called, is incapable of interpreting and accounting for the capricious irrational impulses of their patients?

ARUNDEL. No, I do not, but I dare to affirm that it is by temporarily divesting themselves of their own rational faculties, and entering into the wayward unregulated moods of their patients, that they are able to do so. Besides, there are, I suppose, in most lunatics some relics of ordinary reason, so that there is not a total want of a common standpoint between them and their physicians.

HARRINGTON. Your controversy resolves itself into this: How far can reason, *quasi* reason, divest itself of its customary methods, and enter sympathetically into modes of thought that are irrational? Certainly reason, *applying rational procedure*, can never claim to interpret what has no affinity with itself. I therefore agree with Arundel, there must be some congruous relation between thought and being, or I quite fail to see how one can interpret the other. The principle may be pushed to extravagance, but I am convinced that at the bottom it is sound. Even those Scientists who most deny the objective wisdom or reason displayed in the universe, postulate it at every affirmation of a discovery of fitness between means and ends. Among the Darwinian materialists—Haeckel is a conspicuous instance—the text of their discourses is loudly Atheistic, but the discourses themselves are distinctly Theistic. . . . But we are in danger of leaving Sokrates, I think.

TREVOR. I will return to him by beginning my paper—with this final question on the point just mooted: Who is the best judge of a discord, the musician with a sensitive ear

for music, and who perhaps has studied the law of discords, or any chance *idiotês* who has no ear for music of any kind?

HARRINGTON. Your analogy is wide of the mark. A more suitable one would be this: Could a musician by any possible means enter into the feelings which a deaf mute might conceivably have on the subject of his art? I humbly trow not.

. . . . . .

Dr. Trevor then began his paper.

Sokrates, the greatest thinker of Greece, is also its freest thinker. I mean that he attaches more importance than any other Greek philosopher to the free unrestricted exercise of human reason, and values more highly the results of that exercise. Though not the inventor of Eristic, he first brought it to perfection; he first showed what an invincible instrument for destructive purposes Dialectic is. Sokrates, therefore, is allied both to the Eleatics and the Sophists, for the reason that he introduced and taught the ordinary use of those logical weapons which had been forged in the school of Elea, and in the lecture-rooms of Sicilian Rhetoricians and Athenian Sophists. Sokrates may also claim to be the first Greek thinker who declared Skeptical suspense—the conviction of ignorance—to be a legitimate outcome of the unimpeded energies of the human intellect. His creed is Nescience, not, in the first instance, as a dogmatic estimate of the condition of others, but as an assertion of his own state. Hypothetically he assumes that both truth and knowledge not only exist, but are diffused widely among mankind; hence, he covertly pretends to agree with the multitude who are all convinced that they possess them. Although he cannot share this conviction, it is from no want of effort on his part. His endeavours are unceasing to become partaker in this general store of science, to realise and convert to ready cash for every-day use this speculative stock of knowledge which humanity claims to possess. Having thoroughly ransacked his own mental coffers and found them empty, he industriously explores those of other people—generally of great reputation for wealth; but he plainly intimates, as the result of his search, that the wealth is fictitious, the reputation unfounded, and their true condition not very different from his own. But the quest has been attended with one beneficial result. Setting aside the intellectual vacuity of others, on which from ironical and humorous motives he does not insist, he has at least

ascertained his own real state. He has put in practice one of the earliest axioms of Greek philosophy, 'Know thyself;' and he congratulates himself on that self-knowledge, though it amount only to a conviction of nescience.

A detailed narration of the life of Sokrates we may dispense with. The story of that noble life, and especially its glorious termination, has been so often told that it has become the best known of classical biographies. The son of a sculptor, Sophroniskos, and a midwife, Phanarete, Sokrates was born B.C. 469—the last year of the Persian war. His life, therefore, synchronises with the most brilliant period of Athenian history. Having received the usual elements of an Attic education—comprising Music, Gymnastic, Geometry, and Astronomy—he passed some years in learning his father's trade of sculptor; but Nature had clearly destined him to mould men's intellects rather than copy their bodily forms. He accordingly, though at what age is uncertain, abandoned hewing dead marble; and, after due preparation, began to treat incisively the mass of convictions then current among his countrymen, and of which he conceived himself to possess his proper share. His philosophical studies were commenced by an investigation of the Ionic physicists. Indeed, it seems probable that at one period of his life he had acquired some celebrity as a teacher of physical science. We have his own admission of the powerful charm which natural science exercised over him during his early manhood. He thus entered the portal of Greek thought by the study of her earliest philosophy, and it is observable that his mental career coincides with the general course of Hellenic speculation. Few, indeed, are the aspects of Greek thought that find no representation nor reflection in the Platonic Sokrates. His introduction to the next stage—the Eleatic Philosophy—was accomplished by personal intercourse with Parmenides and Zenon. To these subtle and illustrious thinkers must be ascribed no small share in the impulsion to those mental studies and dialectical exercitations by which the name of Sokrates is signalised in history. To a certain extent they may even claim the title of his teachers; but his own native powers were so great, his intellect so clear and penetrating, his character so independent, the career that he struck out so entirely novel, that it is impossible to suppose him influenced by any external instrumentality beyond mere suggestion. The bent of his own mind was decidedly towards metaphysical and ethical inquiries, and he himself confesses to a passionate love of controversy. His distaste for physical inquiries and his permanent attachment to dialectic are thus readily accounted for. Investiga-

tions into natural phenomena appeared to him to have no practical issue. Theories of cosmogony and kindred subjects taught him nothing about himself—the problem of all others in which he was most interested—nor did they throw much light on the intellectual formation and modes of thought of his fellow-men, the subjects which he deemed next in importance. Accordingly, abandoning all objects of physical research, he resolved to confine himself to mental and ethical philosophy; to the study of human knowledge, its origin, growth, and validity; to the free and unreserved analysis of prevalent convictions and modes of belief; in a word, to search for truth in its immediate relation to human thought and conduct.

The motive influences that impelled Sokrates along this path of free-thought are not, I think, difficult to determine. The chief of them was, perhaps, his personal proclivities. Like all Skeptics, Sokrates possessed an intellect of marvellous acuteness. He was also gifted with an insatiable curiosity for knowledge, as well as with that peculiar subtlety and profundity of thought which is never satisfied with *primâ facie* solutions or probable determinations of intellectual problems. Men of this class—Montaigne is another conspicuous instance—seem to possess an instinctive and spontaneous distrust of what is obvious or apparent; they delight to probe beneath the crust of customary belief and somnolent acquiescence. In any state of society or opinion Sokrates must needs have pursued his mission. The political, social, or individual condition of his fellow-men that could have satisfied him is quite beyond ordinary conception or experience. The perfection of popular education and belief; the general advance in Dialectic and mental culture, which rendered further examination superfluous, would have been for him undesirable. He himself admits before the Dikastery that life without cross-questioning and discussion would not, in his judgment, be worth having. It is to this personal peculiarity that we must ascribe the chief motive that determined his mission. I do not mean to say that he was not convinced, apart from his own predilection, that his intellectual vivisection—his 'torpedo shock,' or his 'horse-fly bite,' as he playfully calls the stimulus—was not most healthful for his fellow-citizens. That he supposed his mission beneficial to the State is a fact beyond doubt. In this respect his conception of public utility coincided admirably with his private idiosyncrasy. His overmastering lust of discussion had the further merit of being the one thing needful for the general community.

To this personal quality must be added various external

stimuli; and firstly those we have noticed as being derived from Parmenides and the Eleatics. The aim of these thinkers was primarily to concentrate men's attention on themselves, to teach them that all sound knowledge begins with self-knowledge. Now Athens, during the latter portion of the Periklean *régime*, was overrun with teachers, who theorized on all branches of natural knowledge, and for the most part in an exceedingly crude manner. The possible size of the sun, the motions and natures of the other heavenly bodies, the origin of the Universe, represent the type of questions which attracted the attention of Athenians more than those ethical and intellectual subjects which concerned every act of their lives. Sokrates himself, we have seen, had once evinced, the keenest interest in these hypotheses. Assuming that he was converted by Parmenides from physical to ethical speculation, it is only natural to suppose that, with an idiosyncrasy like his own, the impulse should have been of a very powerful character; that he should not only have pursued with zest the congenial path thus opened to him, but should have transformed into a popular mission what had perhaps been the esoteric lore of a few disciples.

Nor would I suppose him quite uninfluenced by certain incidental mischiefs which had followed the teaching of the Sophists. It is clear that in certain cases and under the more unscrupulous of these teachers a lax tone of public and private morals had been induced. Probably the point in their teaching which had most contributed to this result was the confounding practice with theory in the sense that a deficiency of demonstrable truth in speculation was held to involve a want of any standard in ethical conduct. This theory, which is most confined to Greek Sophists, was combated with all his force by Sokrates. He is never tired of insisting that a defect of speculative truth does not nullify obvious moral obligation. There was, indeed, a peculiar significance in the fact that he himself combined with sophistical ratiocination and mental freedom a life of unblemished rectitude and moral purity.[1] He thus endeavoured to teach the Athenians to discriminate between what was good and what was harmful in the teaching of the Sophists. Their free methods, so closely copied by himself, were useful. It was right that men should be taught to employ their intellectual powers with freedom, unimpeded by foregone conclusions and ancient prejudices. But their conduct, the practice as distinct from the theory of ethics, belonged very largely to their fellow-men, to the State, to society, to their friends and neighbours; good, unselfish action being the founda-

[1] On this point see Appendix C.

tion stone of all political and social life. But though Sokrates opposed, in the interests of the common weal, immoral application of the Sophists' teaching, it is evident that he derived no small intellectual excitation from the atmosphere of free discussion which those teachings helped to create and sustain. During his early manhood there was in Athens a large and active circulation of free thought among the upper classes of society. Questions of Philosophy, Theology, Art, Ethics, and Politics were discussed not only in public in the theatres and gymnasia, but also at reunions in the houses of prominent citizens. The tone of these speculations was so much in advance of the popular creed that the cry of impiety was more than once raised against Perikles; while of his free-thinking friends, Anaxagoras was compelled to flee, and Pheidias died in prison. Aspasia, the wife of Perikles, and other leaders of Athenian fashion seem to have exercised the same kind of influence on the foremost intellects and political movements of the time as the leaders of the Parisian *salons* in the eighteenth century. That Sokrates attended these conversaziones in the house of Aspasia seems clear; and the keen love of controversy which he admits was so deeply engrained in his character, justifies us in supposing that he manifested a warm interest even if he did not take a leading share in the mimic warfare of so congenial an arena.

Nor, once more, must we leave out of calculation those circumstances in his own life which gave him that peculiar insight into his fellow-men which he manifests in the 'Platonic Dialogues.' His career as an Athenian citizen—and he zealously took part in all the varied functions his citizenship involved—had brought him into intimate personal relation with every class of Athenian, from ruling statesmen to the lowest members of the community. Upon all his fellow-citizens, without distinction of class or calling, Sokrates brought to bear his keen habits of observation, his acute diagnosis of character, as well as his humorous perception of human foibles. The insight he thus acquired into the hollowness, falsity, and mere conventionalism of his age might well have impelled a mind so religiously earnest and sensitive to truth to tear off the veil from this unreality and pretentiousness; to hold up the mirror to his fellow-citizens, and compel them to see themselves in their own nakedness and deformity instead of in those gaudy, borrowed trappings of false knowledge in which they were wont to array themselves.

Among these educational and inspiring influences, and during his transition from one philosophy to another, the mind of Sokrates was itself undergoing a certain discipline. He had brought his

restless research, his subtle dialectic, and his unsatiable craving for truth to bear upon the stock of home convictions, with which he had grown up, and which he shared with the majority of his fellow-citizens. He had, in other words, pursued that path of self-knowledge which he afterwards declared to be the highest wisdom.

We may well suppose that this self-analysis was carried out with all the pitiless vigour which subsequently distinguished his dialogues with others; that no idea or opinion was allowed to pass muster without being first placed on the rack of his dialectic, that no hidden mental recess was left unsearched, no plausible definition unexamined, no popular conviction untested; in a word, that no mental disguise or covert remained, beneath which some unverified dogma or unstable half-truth might haply find shelter. I have often imagined a Platonic dialogue in which the interlocutors are Sokrates the elder and Sokrates the younger, and which might represent the severe self-criticism of former beliefs to which the great dialectician submitted himself. How long this Platonic di-psychical dialogue between Sokrates and himself lasted we have no means of knowing. It probably extended over some years. But the result of his introspection is evident by his own repeated attestation. It may be described as both twofold and somewhat incongruous. Sokrates became persuaded of his complete ignorance, and also of the invincible power of dialectics by which he had arrived at that conviction.

Sokrates thus accomplished that destructive self-diagnosis which is the commonest characteristic of all Skeptics. He therefore takes his place in the history of philosophy by the side of such thinkers as Augustine, Montaigne, Descartes, Pomponazzi, and other Skeptics who set forth in their intellectual career with the same determination to analyse the convictions in which they had been brought up, to sift the pure grain of truth from the chaff in which they found it commingled, though they did not all arrive at precisely similar results. The ample information we possess as to the personal character of Sokrates, as well as his declared opinion of the beneficial results of self-analysis in the case of others, enables us to pronounce with some confidence on the effects he derived from his self-examination. He thereby acquired that robust intellectual independence, that unrestricted freedom of mental energy—making every speculative conviction an open question—that supreme indifference to popular and long-held opinions as such, that indomitable calmness and serenity of mind, that love of truth for its own sake, with which his name is associated in history.

But Sokrates was not satisfied with achieving this conquest

over popular dogmatism and prejudice in his own person. He was desirous that his fellow-citizens should be partakers in this new gospel of self-reliant mental freedom. If the conviction of nescience had been beneficial to himself, why should it not be so to others? False knowledge, ill-grounded opinion, and pretentious dogma were essentially evil, and must needs exercise a pernicious influence wherever they were found. Accordingly, Sokrates commenced that career of public teaching which, on account of the religious earnestness with which he pursued it, and the martyr's death that crowned it, has been worthily termed a mission. But a more extraordinary mission it is scarce possible to conceive. It is altogether unique in the history of human thought, and its extraordinary character pertains as much to its method as to its object. For the latter, it consisted in the public inculcation of human ignorance, in the ruthless investigation and wholesale destruction of unverified and unverifiable opinions. Sokrates was, hence, a teacher of philosophical repentance and self-abnegation. No religious preacher of any creed insisted more strenuously on the necessity of self-examination, on the uprooting of ancient prejudices, on the abandonment of intellectual sin and error, on such duties as are implied in the exhortation 'to cut off the right hand or pluck out the right eye.' But the Sokratic method was as remarkable as in philosophy was its object. He possessed the rare art of compelling his hearers themselves to draw the required conclusions; and the irresistible cogency of the lesson was enhanced by the involuntariness that attended its acquirement. In reality a teacher, he humorously professed to be a learner. Instead of delivering harangues as did the Rhetoricians, or formal lessons as the Sophists, he limited himself to asking questions; and so conducted his catechism that the catechumen became his own instructor.

No doubt the mission was full of peril: every attempt to compel idolators (in the Baconian sense of the word) to resign their idol-worship, to admit the false or nugatory character of long-cherished dogmas, to rest satisfied with true nescience instead of fancied knowledge, must needs be attended with danger. No humility is so great as genuine poverty of spirit, no asceticism so difficult as the surrender of preconceptions—especially on the subject-matter of religion; and the mission of Sokrates, by ignoring ordinary ideas of the gods and their worship, by analysing current ethical notions, and by insisting on the practical duties of life as apart from speculative theories respecting them—struck a blow at the self-complacency of Athenian citizens which they

would be humanly certain to resent whenever a fitting opportunity offered.

But the mission, it must be admitted, was in its real nature Skeptical. The enemy against which Sokrates fought was knowledge and popular convictions. The state he aspired to establish in each of his disciples was a candid and truthful ignorance; an ignorance, moreover, that, so far as its method was concerned, was unlimited. For, granting that much of the current Athenian knowledge was false or baseless, there was nothing in the Sokratic elenchus that limited its operation to such false science and excluded it altogether from the true, and this the Athenians were quite keen-sighted enough to perceive. Sokrates had devised a powerful machine most ingeniously adapted for uprooting mental weeds, but it was almost equally effective in extirpating the good crops. Nor was its character less real on account of the insidious and ironical guise under which it was veiled. Instead of parading openly the virtues of nescience, instead of proclaiming in set terms the vanity and pretentiousness of popular knowledge, instead of insisting plainly on the folly and imbecility of those around him, Sokrates adopted the very opposite course. He feigned to believe that the common knowledge of his fellow-citizens was real, trustworthy, and demonstrable. They were wise, he was the fool anxious to participate in their wisdom. But before doing this he naturally wished to investigate the grounds on which it was based. His adoption of this standpoint was necessitated by his avowed consciousness of ignorance, by his passion for controversy, as well as by a prudent recognition of the danger a more open indictment of popular opinion would have involved. As it was, the conviction of falsity and vanity underlying their belief was a conclusion his hearers themselves were necessitated to draw. The admission of shallow pretentiousness and folly pertaining to unverified truths was one they were coerced, in spite of themselves, into making. Oftentimes the avowal was wrested from his interlocutors without their knowledge or suspicion. They were entrapped into a confession of nescience on the very subjects they imagined they knew best. Supposing themselves wealthy, they were constrained to admit themselves intellectual bankrupts; accounting themselves possessed of rational beliefs and modes of thought, their possessions were proved to be visionary, and this by the very dialectic—the ordinary processes of human reason—on which those tenets were ostensibly grounded.

It is obvious that nothing can exceed or even equal the efficacy of such a method, whatever may be said of the painful wrench

that must have attended its application, especially in the case of disingenuous or bigoted disciples. It was a process of self-instruction that for honest inquirers rendered conviction doubly convincing. Hence, no Skeptical method that ever existed can pretend to rival the Sokratic elenchus, and we may confidently assert that its complete representation, as we have it in the Platonic 'Dialogues of Search,' has made more Skeptics than any manual or method that the doubting ingenuity of man ever devised. Other thinkers—we shall pass in review most of them —have explained the processes by which they succeeded in testing their own knowledge, and, so doing, in ridding themselves of a large amount of bastard and supposititious knowledge; but no Skeptic, either ancient or modern, succeeded so well as Sokrates in undermining the convictions of others, in proving that popular opinion is oftentimes either unconsciously groundless or purposely mendacious.

But while proclaiming Sokrates a methodical and avowed Skeptic, it is but reasonable to set forth in detail the grounds on which I base my opinion, especially as it differs from the common theory on the subject.

I. Firstly, some stress must, I think, be placed on the deliberate renunciation of physical-science studies which Sokrates made in earlier life, and his final reliance for Truth upon introspection; not only because he thereby cut himself adrift from much of prior Greek speculation, but because it evinced a distrust of the knowledge acquired by physical means. We shall find repeatedly, during our researches, that doubt, like knowledge, often begins with the senses, and there is sufficient evidence that Sokrates at a critical point of his intellectual career had conceived a suspicion of all sense-derived knowledge. How far he carried that feeling in the direction of Idealism it would be difficult to say. I do not think myself that he would have agreed with Plato in the Phaidon that a philosopher would be better off without his bodily senses. Perhaps we shall not be far wrong in supposing that Sokrates arrived at the wicket-gate of idealism by adopting the principles implied in such maxims as 'Know thyself,' 'Dialectic is the Nature of Things,' without caring to push to their ideal consequences the logical issues of these propositions. Certainly the general method and standpoint of Sokrates are only reconcilable with a partial and limited Idealism—one that propounded introspection as the readiest path to Truth, but at the same time made Truth the synonym of Nescience. The main advantage that Sokrates derived from Idealism was its supplying him with a

metaphysical standpoint whence he might survey the nature of the human mind, its methods and processes, just as his physical position had enabled him to examine man's knowledge of the material universe. But his conclusion from the latter as from the former investigation, from the self-knowledge as from the Nature-knowledge, was the same Nescience.

For it was not only the fallibility of human senses that his physicist-investigations served to reveal; the weakness of the Reason when brought to bear on the problems of Nature was another conviction derived from the same study. Sokrates discovered that the simplest and most obvious of natural phenomena refused to disclose all its secrets to the human inquirer. The passages in which he relates his experience on this point read like condensed summaries of chapters of Sextos Empeirikos. He says that he once inquired into the physical growth and decay of animals, but with the Skeptical result of doubting whether growth depended on eating and drinking. He had also investigated ordinary ideas of number and comparison, but ended by professing his inability to understand precisely how one and one made two. At last, baffled and disappointed, he took refuge in Introspection. Dialectic became to him 'the Nature of Things;' and though this path, like the other, ended in a conviction of Nescience, the unwelcome conclusion was presented in a more definitive if not more agreeable form, so as at least to induce an acquiescence in it. His metaphysics had also the advantage of not deceiving him with a fictitious glamour of easy knowledge, as physical phenomena were apt to do.

But this supreme confidence in Dialectic, which is disclosed in its definition as the Nature of Things, seems to call for a passing remark. I incline to regard it as the most noteworthy feature in the intellectual character of Sokrates. That Introspection, self-analysis, is the only road to Truth and Knowledge he is experimentally certain.[1] Indeed the Ratiocination of a wise man he declares to be the *only conceivable* method of Truth-search. But though satisfied with the way, he is not certain that he himself *must* attain Truth by pursuing it—we might say that he is not so anxious about the termination of his path as he is that it should follow the right direction. If Truth were the goal of all human effort, we could not be wrong in following undeviatingly that Unfettered Reasoning which was the only road leading to it. To

[1] It should be noticed, as one of the many ties that connect Sokrates with the Sophists, that in the *Sophistes* he describes the Sophist as doubting of all phenomena, *and knowing only the Idea.*

Dialectic, therefore, he conceded, sometimes in playful irony, but often with sincere earnestness, a certain despotism over the Human Reason in general, and over the methods of his own inquiry in particular.[1] It was a transference of the absolute supremacy of Truth to the sole method by which it was acquired. Whatever Dialectic or Reason taught must needs be true, no matter what it was or how much it conflicted with popular prejudices and convictions. He represents it as a kind of tyrant, in whose hands he himself is volitionless and helpless. Its dictum is the judgment of a superior court, which he has no power to disregard or gainsay. Suppose, *e.g.* it were to lead to a denial of the gods, he cannot help it. Assume it to involve a criticism of any other long acknowledged truth, that is not his fault. Suppose it terminate, as in his own case it actually did terminate, in Nescience, the result must be accepted if not gratefully, at least unrepiningly. At most, an inexpedient conclusion can only be avoided by the very road leading to it. Dialectic must, if possible, rebuild what it has itself overthrown.

It is easy to criticise the position of Sokrates. Modern Science and, in England, the Experience Philosophy have long claimed a victory over the metaphysical method. Nay more, it must be admitted that the position itself is suicidal, and it seems probable that Socrates recognized it as such. Dialectic, the Nature of all Things, is ultimately the Destroyer of all Things. Plato himself acknowledged its double-edged prowess,[2] though without the full admission of Nescience which the discovery drew from his more candid master.

We thus arrive, by tracing the footsteps of Sokrates, at his final conclusion. As I have said, it is that of the Skeptic. On all matters of speculation, and in regard of absolute knowledge, he can only affirm his ignorance. He deliberately adopts, therefore, for himself a position of active neutrality, which is equivalent to the suspense of later Skeptics, and he claims for the standpoint he has chosen the sanction and commendation of the Delphic oracle. We shall presently have to consider certain implied 'unconditional obligations' in the direction of Practice—common to Sokrates

[1] Comp., *e.g.* the latter part of *Charmides* (Jowett's trans. vol. i. pp. 33, 34), and see his discrimination between the philosopher and the partisan in the *Phaidon*. Under the same head also falls his expressed inability to resist the mingled force and fascination of Dialectic, in the *Apology*.

[2] *Republic*, end of book vii., where the description of unlimited Eristic might almost seem to have a satirical reference to the Sokratic *Dialogues of Search*.

with other Skeptics—which we must regard as a set-off against what would else have been unlimited Nescience. Meanwhile we must not confound the pure Skepticism of Sokrates with the determined Negation of Pyrrhôn and his successors. The conscious ignorance of the former is more a personal property than a characteristic of humanity. Although, therefore, Sokrates professes continually that he knows nothing, he does not make his conclusion absolute and universal. He never denies the existence of Truth, nor does he deny the ultimate possibility of human effort to attain it. Such a denial would, indeed, have stultified his own position, and made all human inquiry a vain and fruitless folly. For whatever else is uncertain in the character of Sokrates, there can be no doubt as to his being not only a searcher for Truth himself, but one who made Truth-search the sole worthy employment of human life. Nor was this opinion merely the outcome of his view of the necessities of others; it was also the result of his own feelings and passions. Intellectual exercise in any and every direction was an absolute necessity for the great thinker. Extreme negation was therefore as abhorrent to him as the most supercilious and ill-founded assertion; and he wages his Dialectic warfare with the former as well as the latter.

As a Zetetic or searcher Sokrates is in accord with the highest spirit of Greek Skepticism. When Sextos Empeirikos defined the different classes of philosophic thinkers, he reserved for the Skeptics the attribute of pure, disinterested search. This is in truth one main characteristic of Sokrates. He is a born inquirer; a searcher whom no concession or discovery can satisfy, and no difficulty can deter. He himself represents his own vehement passion for reasoned discussion, his perpetual efforts to find, if not truth, yet the closest possible approximations to it, in a variety of images; sometimes in an ironical and uncouth fashion, as in the 'Phaidros,' where he compares himself, allured into the country by a promise of discussion, to a cow attracted by a bait of leaves and fruit, and says that a similar bait might have drawn him all round Attica. Nor was he content only with being a searcher, but he must make other men searchers as well. It was just this excitation of the dormant intellects of the Athenian populace, this abrupt and forceful impulsion of them along a path of mental activity and research, that he regarded as the greatest service he could do the State. He might have adopted the title which a fellow-Skeptic, Giordano Bruno, gave himself on account of the awakening effects of his teaching, '*Dormitantium animarum excubitor*,' the awaker of sleepy souls. For a similar reason Sokrates compared the

startling effects of his elenchus to the shock of a torpedo-fish, or the bite of a gadfly. Nor do I think that there is, as some might aver, the least incongruity between his profession of Nescience and his untiring search for Science. On the other hand, it was his conviction of the former that induced and justified the latter. Had he boasted not ignorance but attainment, the possession of infallible truths, further search would have been superfluous. Sokrates saw and proclaimed far more clearly than most thinkers that it is not Skepticism but Dogmatism that operates as a drag on the human faculties, and induces intellectual sloth and torpor. It is the man who has caught and eaten his game, who perchance is heavy from the effects of the meal, that rests from the chase, not he who is still hungry and desirous to appease his appetite. The Athenians, no doubt, were fully satisfied with their dogmas and truth-discoveries, and did not wish them disturbed. It seemed to them, as it always does to dogmatists, impious to question or analyse long-venerated beliefs and conceptions, mythological, religious, political, or ethical. If examination must needs be instituted, if search must be undertaken, it should be confined to newer verities, not yet fully ascertained, or which have not as yet received the imprimatur of the past. But Sokrates was altogether of a different opinion. It was among these old truths that inquiry was most needful. They were in his opinion—and we shall see when we come to the Sokratic method as displayed in the 'Dialogues of Search' that that opinion was well founded—so many dead corpses waiting for and demanding an inquest. They were estates for which, though long in possession, it was needful to produce title-deeds. Prescription, antiquity, sacredness, were in his eyes no claim to exemption from investigation. Of all truths and systems indifferently he maintained that their first principles should from time to time be reviewed and tested, and that the higher the subject the greater should be the accuracy and verifiable character of the fundamental principles on which it was based.[1] Sokrates was clearly convinced that truths might occasionally be too true; that their reception might even in their own interests be too much taken for granted. In the words of Coleridge—and few more pregnant truths were ever enounced by that great thinker—'Truths of all others the most awful and mysterious, yet being at the same time of universal interest, are too often considered as so true that they lose all the life and efficiency of truth, and lie bedridden in the dormitory of the soul, side by side with the most despised and exploded errors.'[2]

[1] *Phaidon*, 107 B.; *Rep.* vi. 504 E.

[2] Coleridge's *Friend*, No. 5, p. 76.

Nor, again, is there any real incongruity between the eager and comprehensive search of Sokrates and the indifference with which he contemplated the result. Convinced of his actual Nescience, he was nevertheless not sanguine of exchanging it for Science, at least to any appreciable extent. How his search might terminate here or hereafter he was indeed by no means anxious. Probably, like Lessing, had the alternative been submitted to him, he would have preferred the search to the find. Undoubtedly he would have done so had the latter condition implied a cessation of intellectual activity. Having in his possession a few working certainties of a practical kind, he was indifferent to speculative infallibility. Reverting to our former simile, he resembled a hunter who has a crust of bread in his pocket sufficient to allay the worst pangs of hunger, and is comparatively indifferent to the spoil; but who nevertheless feels the necessity of the exercise, the free movement of the body, the expansion and exhilaration of mind which the pursuit of the chase gives him. Moreover, to Sokrates the matter had a still more solemn bearing. Search for Truth and Knowledge was his divinely assigned mission, just as his persuasion of Nescience was its divinely sanctioned starting-point. To abjure his call, to retire from his task, as he told his judges, would be an open breach of the divine command. Rather than commit this he would willingly suffer death.

Sokrates, then, by his own frank and unreserved confession of Nescience, must be reckoned a self-avowed Skeptic. This estimate is confirmed—if confirmation of his own repeated declaration be thought needful—by the method presented to us in the Platonic 'Dialogues of Search.' It is to these the inquirer must always turn for a complete account of the Sokratic elenchus by the disciple most capable of entering into its spirit and purport. But on referring to them we find a portrayal of Sokrates as a subtle, profound, but at the same time unmitigated Skeptic. From his standpoint of Nescience he analyses and discusses a variety of prevalent notions—metaphysical, religious, ethical, political; and in all cases he arrives ultimately at inconclusive or negative results. In one he discusses prudence, in another friendship, in a third courage; while others are taken up with Rhetoric, the methods of the Sophists, impiety, the teachableness of virtue, &c., but in all alike the conclusion is uncertain. Truths, apparently the most obvious and easy of definition, are shown on Sokratic analysis to be charged with insuperable difficulties. All his interlocutors are landed one after another in an inextricable labyrinth of self-contradictions and absurdities, from which the sole

escape is the admission of complete ignorance. Nor is this result wonderful: anything more unscrupulous, more unreasonable, more determinedly captious and implacably contentious, it is quite impossible to conceive. With all his covert sneers at 'All-wise Eristics' and Sophists, Sokrates approves himself more Eristic than the former, and more Sophistical than the latter. Accordingly, current notions, opinions, and beliefs fall before his dialectical battery like naked savages before a Gatling gun. No dogma or permanent conviction could, indeed, stand before such unprincipled tactics. No fort of human belief—no matter what its original strength—could long hold out before so determined an attack, such an unceasing and varied succession of stratagems, assaults, feints, ambuscades, subterfuges, and surprises, as Sokrates brings to bear upon the opinions of his fellow-citizens. Allowing, as in duty bound, a fair margin to his confidence in dialectics, and granting the truth of Aristotle's remark that he was precluded from any definite conclusion or dogmatic assertion by his own profession of nescience,[1] it must still be a lasting charge against Sokrates, from a dogmatic standpoint, that his methods in application transcend all reasonable scope; that his Dialectic is, in effect, an example of Eristic of the worst kind. What this excess serves to prove—and this, as regards Sokrates, is the chief outcome of the Dialogues of Search—is the intensity of his own conviction of Nescience, and the determination he displays in showing that his condition is really shared by many who in their own estimation are models of wisdom and knowledge. Unfortunately, in trying to effect this he has left us, I will not say a portrait, but a caricature of a Skeptic whose Skepticism is incurable, of a rationalist who can at times reason away ratiocination, of a logician who can logically annihilate logic.

In order more fully to determine the character of the Dialogues of Search, and to fix their true position in Skeptical thought, all that is needed is to compare them—(1) with the methods of the Sophists which they occasionally vilify; (2) with those of the more pronounced Skeptics, *e.g.* Pyrrhôn, Ainesidemos, and especially Sextos Empeirikos. With the first they shared, as we have seen, the inordinate disputatiousness, the love of discussion for its own sake independently both of fair starting-points and legitimate conclusions, the desire of dialectical victory at any cost, and therefore the effort to make the worse prove the better cause of which Aristophanes had accused Sokrates. With the Skeptics, too, he

[1] *Soph. Elench.* chap. xxxiv. Comp. Cicero, *Lucullus*, chap. v.

shares a determination to negation often in excess of his own standpoint. He avails himself of quibbles, fallacies, and ambiguities without limit, in order to establish an inconclusive issue. It would, indeed, be difficult to name a single illegitimate process employed by subsequent Skeptics which has no parallel or example in the Platonic Dialogues. Sokrates is evidently well versed in all the bypaths, as well as the main roads, of Dialectic, and is by no means scrupulous in employing the former when the latter do not serve his purpose. Hence, notwithstanding his belief in absolute truth which differentiates him from the school of Pyrrhôn, he often reasons as if he believed truth to be an impossibility, or at least as if its presence on the side of an adversary would have been an unwelcome phenomenon. I am convinced that this is only what I have already termed it, an exaggeration of his own suspensive position. He finds it in practice difficult (subsequent Skeptics found it impossible) to assert distinctly his own Nescience without implying that this was incontrovertibly the condition of all men. But however this may be, of the fact of his unprincipled Eristic and his ostensible preference of Victory over Truth there can be no doubt. Bacon, among others, has long ago pointed out that characteristic of the Sokratic method as one that allied him to the Skeptics,[1] and Professor Jowett remarks, *à propos* of his discussion on friendship, that Sokrates 'allowed himself to be carried away by a sort of Eristic or illogical logic against which the truest definition of friendship would be unable to stand.' A similar remark, it may be added, might be made on most of the themes of the Platonic Dialogues.

It would be easy to carry out into greater detail the general proof of the Skepticism of Sokrates furnished by the 'Dialogues of Search,' by enumerating other instances of his profound distrust of commonly received dogmas. Setting aside for the present corroborative testimony, of which both among contemporaries and later writers there is no lack, we cannot but be struck with the thorough-going character which Sokrates confesses to have marked his Doubt. We have seen that, like a celebrated English Skeptic of our own day, he was not inclined to attach to

[1] Speaking of the *De Elenchis Sophismatum* of Aristotle, and of the Greek Thinkers who had practised it, he says, 'Neque illud tantum in persona sophistarum antiquorum. . . . . verum etiam in persona ipsius Socratis, qui cum illud semper agat, ut nihil affirmet, sed a ceteris in medium adducta infirmet, ingeniosissime objectionum, fallaciarum, et redargutionum modos expressit.' *De Aug. Sci.* lib. v. cap. iv. *Works*, Ellis and Spedding, vol. i. p. 642.

the properties of numbers that indubitable certainty generally accorded to them. The combination of one and one is often adduced as the 'Ne plus ultra' of Scientific Truth. To Sokrates it afforded matter for puzzlement and doubt. Self-identity—the 'Cogito, ergo sum' of Descartes—is generally regarded as an irresistible truth. But Sokrates seems to have doubted his own identity—to have admitted the impossibility of discriminating between his dream and waking states, and professed his ignorance as to whether he were Sokrates or a multiform serpent of Typhon,[1] —an anomalous result to have followed, which it seems to have done, the observance of *γνῶθι σεαυτόν*. His doubt further spread itself to the mythological, religious, and ethical beliefs of his countrymen. Indeed, his dictum that the first principles of all systems should be analyzed and reviewed from time to time must be regarded, from the dogmatist point of view, as a Philosophical Radicalism of a very sweeping kind. His doubt embraced also Language, of which he affirmed his inability to say how it came into existence, while traces of Nominalism are by no means rare in his utterances. Added to all these are his own frequent admissions of Nescience and his encomium on the awakening effects of doubt both on the individual and on the State. And if he held in reserve two or three abstract truths, the reservation was so well kept that it might easily have escaped the notice, not only of a casual observer, but even of an occasional disciple. The every-day attitude presented by Sokrates to his fellow-citizens was that of an intrepid reasoner—a doubter on most points of popular belief—a secret despiser of the national gods, and an astute advocate, well skilled in making the worse seem the better cause. His mission was regarded as a dissemination of Doubt, and he himself as a veritable though half-disguised Skeptic.

But granting this to be the character of Sokrates, why—it will be objected—have historians of Philosophy not only refused to pronounce him a Skeptic, but have agreed to consider him as the most potent adversary of the Skepticism of the Sophists?

For this three causes may be assigned (I enumerated them in our opening discussion) :—

1. A perverted stress upon Sokratic irony.
2. The fact that we have the Skepticism of Sokrates distilled through and largely neutralized by the Idealistic Dogmatism of Plato.
3. The halo of martyrdom which has somewhat induced an oblivion of the cause for which he suffered, *i.e.* Free-Thought.

[1] *Phaidros*, 230 A. Comp. Sextos Empeirikos, *adv. Math.* lib. vi. § 265.

1. The Nescience professed by Sokrates has been held to be an ironical profession of a state he was really far from feeling. He assumed it in order—(1) to render his persistent inquiry for information reasonable; (2) to convict others of an ignorance as great, if not greater, than his own. Sokrates, it is said, is a dogmatist in the cloak of a Sophist or Skeptic. If he allows any of his arguments to terminate inconclusively, this is not because he does not know the true conclusion, but because for the sake of his interlocutors and his pretended ignorance he will not disclose it. If, *e.g.* he permits Lysis to depart with no definition of Friendship capable of withstanding the assaults of a libertine logic, or if Euthyphro is dismissed unenlightened as to the true definition of Impiety, this is not because Sokrates does not know what Friendship or Impiety is, but because he is bent on discovering for the benefit of his hearers their own unexpected ignorance upon such obvious and every-day topics. Now this reasoning seems to me utterly devoid of foundation. Sokrates—though I am far from denying his masterly employment of irony—is, on the subject of his Nescience, sincere enough. He really does share the ignorance though not the mental confusion of his interlocutors on the points controverted. He is thoroughly persuaded that no definition of 'Friendship' or 'Impiety,' or any other of his conversational themes, can be propounded which will withstand the assaults of an Eristic, rapid, versatile, and unprincipled. Indeed, it is in his superior knowledge of Dialectic, in his profounder study of the avenues to human conviction, that his Nescience as regards fixed principles and dogmatic truths may be said to consist. Thus he is far more convinced of his ignorance than his hearers are of theirs because he is aware of the almost numberless aspects of relativity under which most human truths, especially of a religious or ethical kind, are capable of being presented; and it was precisely in this fuller conception of Nescience that, as he himself observed, lay the main difference between himself and ordinary men. In other words, Sokrates is a real, not a fictitious, Skeptic; his Ignorance is felt, not assumed. Indeed, his conviction of it is all the more vivid and indestructible for being based on knowledge, just as the study of the Buddhist found its outcome in a Nirvana of semi-consciousness. Sokrates has explored every department of Greek thought; he has followed every stream of its speculation to its fountain-head; he has weighed every argument of every subject-matter in the scale of his reason; he has applied to every portion of human knowledge as it came before him a Dialectic, bold, ruthless, and utterly unscrupulous. He ends with a conviction as

assured and indubitable as anything can be that Truth in itself—in its final determination and as a matter of speculation—is indiscoverable. Like Lessing, he is inclined to regard it as the exclusive prerogative of Deity.[1]

2. The Skepticism of Sokrates has also been overlooked because it has been so inextricably blended with the idealism of Plato. Unfortunately for the history of philosophy, but quite in harmony with his free tendencies, his non-affirming character, and his passion for *vivâ voce* discussion, Sokrates left no written work behind him. His method and opinions have to be disentangled from the crude realism of Xenophon, and the extreme transcendentalism of Plato. The latter is especially responsible for the prevalent conception of Sokrates as a half-formed idealist, a teacher whose own progress in the path of ontology, afterwards so boldly developed by Plato, was cut short by death. No doubt the method of Sokrates was introspective. The starting-point of his search was 'Know thyself;' and although he in one place disclaims any knowledge of Dialectic as a definite system, and professes to rely only on common-sense, the method of self-knowledge enounced in the maxim, 'Dialectic is the Nature of Being,' must have been a fundamental law of his own thought. But while we recognise in these principles the rudiments of Platonic idealism, we must be careful not to allow these, or for that matter any other conclusions as to his teaching, to contravene or obscure his own admission of Nescience. This must always be accepted as the central fact of his intellectual character, the standard by which we must estimate the overcharged personal sentiment of disciples, and the glosses of commentators. How absurd, *e.g.* is it to suppose that with his profound conviction of Nescience, Sokrates could really have held the doctrine of Reminiscence, or that from the same standpoint he could have indulged in those speculations as to the future world contained in the 'Phaidon' and 'Gorgias.' It seems to me that we should apply to the Sokrates of History his own recommendation, and review those first principles on which his intellectual character has generally been based. When we do this sincerely, taking as our starting-point that mental attribute on which he oftenest insisted, and which is most generally ascribed to him by his fellow-citizens, we can have no hesitation in pronouncing him a Skeptic. No other designation is possible for a man who so continually proclaims his absolute ignorance of truth.

3. Another cause that has tended to hide his Skepticism, or at least to prevent its full acknowledgment, is the noble fearlessness

[1] *Apologia*, 23 B.

with which he met death. Sokrates is the first and most distinguished member of that band of martyrs who have endured death in the cause of Free-thought, and of which our list of Skeptics will furnish us with several more instances. But in the death of Sokrates men have forgotten its cause. Martyrdom, as a rule, implies convictions definite, strong, and passionate. But Sokrates is an instance of a martyr who disclaims all convictions in the sense of positive knowledge; whose sole earnest persuasion is that of his own ignorance. Historians, I think, have hastily endeavoured to rectify what they have deemed an anomaly, and in order to assimilate Sokrates to other martyrs have credited him with the creed of a dogmatist. What Sokrates suffered for was not a particular creed, but the confessed want of any creed; or, still better, he died for pure mental liberty, for absolute freedom, whether of belief, disbelief, or unbelief.

But granting the Skepticism of Sokrates, the question immediately suggests itself, How far was he a conscious Skeptic? How far did he conceive that his standpoint of Nescience assimilated him to deniers or oppugners of all truth? To this the answer is not difficult. Skepticism, as a formal profession, was as yet unknown in Greece (we shall come to its introduction when we discuss Pyrrhôn at our next meeting). Free analysis and inquiry had already been carried to their extremest point by Eleatics and Sophists, but there had yet arisen no school of avowed doubters, still less of deniers. So convinced were Hellenic thinkers of the necessity of mental freedom in every direction, that it might have seemed on *à priori* grounds unlikely that such a school could have found much favour in Greece. The proclamation of the absolute impossibility of all human knowledge was not only a dogma as arbitrary as it was overbearing, but it left no room for search, for that perpetual exercise of the intellect which to a Greek thinker was its most imperious necessity. I can therefore quite imagine that Sokrates did not think his attitude of ignorance was equivalent to such a denial of all truth as an extreme Sophist might have professed. On the other hand, I am certain he would have denied such an imputation with vehemence. I do not think he quite realised, what I believe unquestionable, that the difference between himself and ordinary Sophists was one of degree rather than of kind. Indeed, he seems to me to have been quite indifferent to distinctions between rival schools of philosophy; and when on his trial he is accused of being a Sophist, the apathy he manifests in rebutting the charge is so great as to amount to a confirmation of it. Be-

sides, his Skepticism, with all its consequences, whether good or ill, is a direct result of his Dialectic. Paradoxical as it may seem, it was in simple fealty to Reason, in the full recognition of her supremacy as the sole guide to Truth, that Sokrates allowed what seemed her paralogisms or '*reductiones ad absurdum*.' The misologist, to use his own term, had as little ground for his dislike of Reason as the misanthropist for his hatred of humanity. The *logos* was as much an entity requiring sympathetic consideration and proper deference as the *anthropos* with whom it was allied, nay much more, for the reason was the highest faculty of man. Hence above all other matters the rights of the ratiocination had to be considered, not the conclusions haply evolved from it, still less the effect of those conclusions on the ordinary convictions of mankind. If Sokrates is the apostle of truth and reason, he has no business to set up for his mission another didactic purpose of his own. Ratiocination must proceed at its own 'sweet will,' with just enough impulse imparted to it by controversy to keep it in motion, and must not be incumbered with the advocacy of any prescribed dogma. He draws in the 'Phaidon' a distinction between the philosopher and the partisan. The latter, he says, will not care for *the rights of the argument*, but only how best to impress his own convictions on the minds of his hearers. Sokrates, on the other hand, both in theory and practice, cared for the rights of the argument to an extent that no controversialist has surpassed. If his dialectic terminated in a *cul de sac* whence was no egress nor regress, it was to be regarded as the chosen conclusion, the pure self-determination of the reason. If the result were Skeptical, an antinomy of positive and negative, it was because the reason would have it so. If the effects of the argument on the convictions of the hearers were disquieting, so much the better; this was the torpedo-shock by which reason was wont sometimes to startle unthinking men. If the end were absolute disbelief in the conventional dogmas of men, the fault, if fault it were, was the reason's. He himself, as its humble minister and missionary, had nothing to do with it. In the eyes of Sokrates, Reason was an absolute potentate, whose decrees had to be received with submission—a kind of intellectual *Moira* or Fate, whose determinations could not be questioned, and from whose judgments there lay no appeal. Reason, Dialectic, had convinced Sokrates of his Nescience, and had thereby conferred on it a semi-divine sanction, equivalent to if not originally identical with the declaration of the Delphic oracle.

We are here confronted by another question. If Sokrates's disclaimer of knowledge, and his assertion of Nescience as divine

wisdom, forbade the cherishing of any dogmas or definitive tenets, how far, it may be asked, is this negative position compromised by the profession he makes of exercising his mother's maieutic art? Schwegler and others appear to take the well-known passage in the 'Theaitetos' as indicating a dogmatic tendency. No doubt, if we could believe in the earnestness of Sokrates, and if his claim on the point did not conflict with other professions made with much greater *bona fides*, it would assume that character. Any one claiming as he did to aid in bringing into the world latent truths, must, *primâ facie*, assume their existence in those on whom his art is exercised. But when, setting aside the terms of the passage which is one of the most grotesquely ironical in the whole of the Platonic Dialogues, we examine the manner in which he discharged intellectually his mother's craft, we find strong reason to doubt his sincerity. He himself claimed the fullest right to determine whether the offspring he thus ushered into existence was worth preserving or not, and it is not too much to say that he exercises this right in a manner that, if transferred to ordinary obstetrics, would go far to depopulate the world. He approaches the individual in labour with a distinct prepossession that the issue is really worthless, that the looked-for truths are either spurious or valueless, and prove not the pregnancy but the vacuity of those who vent them. The destructive results of his actual obstetrics we have already contemplated in the 'Dialogues of Search,' and these are indeed the only kind compatible with his general standpoint. It would be a question worth asking of those who think that Sokrates was really serious in his profession of intellectual midwifery, what positive final truths he himself admits having thus elicited; in other words, what are the well-formed and healthy offspring whose birth he really helped to accomplish. The only object Sokrates, in consistency with his own principles, could have had in his exercise of the maieutic art was to prove that his own barrenness—for which he humorously pleads the general childlessness of midwives—was a mental condition largely shared by others who thought themselves gravid with truth and wisdom. And what he would fain accomplish was to force the persons operated on—as Charmides, Lysis, and Euthyphro—to perceive their real condition, to create a feeling of intellectual shortcoming, and so to impel them to fuller and well-founded knowledge. What the philosophical obstetrician really delivered them of, and what I maintain was the only offspring for which he looked, was the false conviction of their own wisdom. He would naturally represent this deliverance, as he did his own feeling of ignorance, as the most

important of positive truths. Besides, the argument that Sokrates expected to find in others the wisdom he was unconscious of possessing, completely stultifies his supposed relation to the Delphic oracle. For if the oracle proclaimed that it was his consciousness of his own ignorance that made him the wisest of men, he could not expect to find truth in those who were *ex hypothesi* not only not conscious of their ignorance, but who imagined themselves to possess distinct verities, and thought they only needed obstetric assistance to divulge them. Were then, I would ask, those on whom Sokrates exercised his art wiser than the Delphic oracle, and was the wisdom which consisted in imagined knowledge superior to that based upon conscious ignorance? To maintain such a position would be to oppose the central truths of the life and doctrine of Sokrates.

Speculatively, then, and theoretically, Sokrates was a Free-thinker and Skeptic. He permitted no barrier to his intellectual exercitations; he recognised no mental compulsion forbidding or limiting the scope of his freest researches, except the self-imposed laws of Dialectic itself.[1] Nor could he discern in the condition of the universe any distinct impediment or authoritative prohibition of human inquiry; on the contrary, the reason of the wise man he regarded as the only conceivable method of ascertaining truth. His mental liberty, therefore—both subjectively and objectively—was as complete as even a free-thinker like himself could desire.

But there is another aspect of Sokrates' many-sided character we have not yet touched upon: I mean what relates to his practice. A philosopher and thinker cannot, however much he might desire it, limit all his faculties to thought; he must needs be to some extent a doer. The exigencies of natural laws, of social relations in their simplest form, entail some amount of practical activity. Sokrates was convinced that he knew nothing, was certain that he did not share the assumed knowledge of his fellow-citizens. Still, imperious necessity commanded him to regulate his life and action in some form or manner. This might seem to him incongruous, but it was none the less compulsory. Sokrates in this shared the fate of all thinkers whose intellectual tendencies are most widely removed from the beaten paths of ordinary speculation and action. The idealist, *e.g.* who is most averse to matter and material existence, is still obliged to take it sometimes into account. The Skeptic, again, whose nescience is most pronounced and complete,

[1] It should be noted that Sokrates disclaims the knowledge of Dialectic, *i.e.* the formal science professed by the Sophists, and professes to be guided only by the instincts and methods of common-sense. Comp. on this point the *Euthydemos* and *Ion*.

dare not ignore the facts of existence. Sokrates never dreamt of extending his ignorance into the region of necessary and palpable truths. Besides physical and social cravings demanding to be satisfied, he was conscious also of intuitions, mental cravings which he must needs allay by the adoption of formal principles best fitted for the purpose. Accordingly, he assumed certain abstract truths or speculative probabilities of the same kind as those which the great German Sokrates—I mean Kant—afterwards called categorical imperatives. These Sokrates did not pretend to be able to demonstrate dialectically;[1] he could not even account fully to himself for their possession. They did not, therefore, interfere with his Skeptical nescience. Still they satisfied urgent requirements—partly intellectual, partly sentimental. They formed certain rough connecting links between his philosophical position and the popular creed, and they afforded a basis for ordinary action. These indemonstrable principles but practical essentials were :

1. God. 2. Virtue. 3. Reason.

1. The main charge on which Sokrates was tried and condemned was that of Atheism and Impiety. He had denied, said Meletos, the gods of the country, and had materialized even the semi-divine powers, the sun and the moon. This had been an old indictment against his teaching. Twenty-four years previously Aristophanes had affirmed that Sokrates had not merely abandoned the popular belief in the gods of Olympus, but had substituted for their sway the rule of physical forces. This is the argument of the well-known drama 'The Clouds,' which we may take as expressing in an exaggerated caricature the popular conception of the drift of Sokrates' teaching before he had altogether abandoned his physical-science researches, and this estimate is confirmed by much that we find in the 'Dialogues' of Plato. Sokrates was evidently, though he expresses himself with a characteristic combination of caution and banter on the subject, far in advance of the mythological ideas that still formed the basis of Greek religion. But he was not alone in this attitude of Skepticism. Free speculations on this and kindred subjects were, as we have hinted, not uncommon among the leading classes of Athenians at the end of the fourth century B.C. In the theatre, the market, the public baths, a tone of religious Neologianism was distinctly observable. The age was one of Transition. The ancient deities, in the form in which they were recognised by Homer and Hesiod, had almost ceased to exist. Nominally they

[1] Comp. Lactantius: "Recte ergo Socrates, et eum secuti Academici scientiam sustulerunt, *quæ non disputantis, sed divinantis est.*"—*De Falsa Sapientia*, cap. iii.

were still held in reverence. Temples and statues continued to be raised in their honour. Sacrifices were offered to them. Their priests were maintained at the public expense. So far as a state religion existed at Athens it was still the worship of Zeus, Hêrê, Aphroditê, and Athênê. But among the cultured classes this had degenerated into a mere formality, more cold, heartless, and indifferent than Naaman's bowing in the House of Rimmon. Among the populace, however, the ancient creed continued to possess much of its pristine power. Aristophanes shows us how closely it was associated in the minds of Athenian Conservatives with the former glories of Attica, with the hardness and endurance of its population, the simplicity of their manners, the greater purity of their lives. Nor were its effects less considerable, regarded as a political engine. The popular fury kindled by the mutilation of the Hermæ is a conclusive instance of the potency of the old creed, when reanimated by religious and political excitement. It was frequently charged against the novel speculations of the Sophists that they had introduced moral and political laxity in the place of the rectitude, austerity, and courage that distinguished, *e.g.* the men of Marathon. But we must accept the evidence of such a *laudator temporis acti* as Aristophanes with a large allowance for political partisanship. At least it is difficult to conceive how the worship of Zeus and Aphroditê, with the legends attached to their names, could have contributed to popular morality more than belief in the νοῦς of Anaxagoras or the 'Vortex' which the comic poet ascribed to Sokrates as his substitute for Zeus. We have noticed that the earliest symptoms of religious Skepticism in Greece were evoked by the immoral deeds which mythology attached to those names; and the use made of these divine escapades by unscrupulous reasoners is a prominent feature in the works of the dramatic poets. The belief of Sokrates appears to me to have been more Theistic than that of most thinkers of his time. With the evidence of the 'Apology'—the work on which we must chiefly rely for the ultimate form of his religious faith—before us, we cannot deny his profound conviction of the existence of a supreme divine power, whose different attributes, leaving out those that were immoral, he was prepared to recognise under the various names of the Olympian deities; but whose practical energies he conceived of under the form of natural laws and powers. Deeply into the question I do not think Sokrates ever penetrated, or for that matter desired to penetrate. Convinced that there was an overruling power that took cognizance of men and their doings, he was also persuaded of its identity with absolute truth, absolute wisdom, absolute righteousness. But this conviction, real though it was,

was arrived at and expressed with the utmost guardedness and reserve. Far, indeed, was Sokrates from wishing to dogmatize on such a subject. He himself confesses that he 'does not know the truth about the gods, and that his belief is a matter of probability and human conjecture.'[1] He might have said with Clough—

> O Thou! in that mysterious shrine
> Enthroned, as I must say, divine,
> I will not frame one thought of what
> Thou mayest either be or not.

Nor does this intuitive conviction detract from the Nescience which is his common intellectual standpoint. He frequently allows intuition as a faculty transcending the limits of Dialectic. Besides which, the unconditional nature of everything pertaining to the Supreme Being renders a position of partial suspense and Nescience the most natural and becoming for erring humanity. Aristophanes had ludicrously represented the intellectual suspense of Sokrates as a material elevation in a basket, and made him boast that from that position he could look down on the gods. It would be truer to say that from that position he was able to look higher than on the earth-born divinities of the Greek mythology—to contemplate not as objects of knowledge, but of devout imagination and feeling, the highest abstractions of Infinite Wisdom, Righteousness, and Truth.

But the question remains, How far was Sokrates guilty of Atheism from the point of view of his accusers and his judges? To them, no doubt, the name implied merely a different theological belief from their own. This was in reality the meaning of the Indictment for 'Impiety' which the Athenians preferred against Anaxagoras and Prodikos, Perikles and Pheidias. If Sokrates did not hold the mythological doctrines of the Athenian populace —if his conception of Deity tended to divest it of the crude anthropomorphism common to the unthinking crowd, if its tendency was partly a recognition of natural forces, partly a monotheistic abstraction such as had been attempted by the νοῦς of Anaxagoras, this was, no doubt, equivalent in the minds of Meletos and Anytos to a distinct promulgation of Atheism.

The mode in which Sokrates deals with this change in the 'Apology' is instructive. With every desire to side with such a genuine martyr for truth, it must be admitted that he rather waives and tries to explain it away than meets it with a direct negative. In point of fact, the gulf between Sokrates and his accusers, or, what amounted to the same thing, between the old

[1] *Cratylus*, 401 A, Jowett's Trans. i. p. 672.

mythology and the new insistence on general laws or unifying abstractions, was not easily bridged over. The issue between himself and his accusers was not met by a confession of belief in the sun and moon as semi-divine, accompanied by a significant silence as to the existence of Zeus and Hêrê and the other divinities of the Hellenic Pantheon. So far, therefore, as a cautious, equivocating Skepticism as regards the existence of these potentates constituted Atheism, and was held to be a capital crime against the State, there can be little doubt of the justice of his condemnation.

In estimating the theological beliefs of Sokrates, it is impossible to sever his general notion of the Divine Being from the particular intimations he professed to receive, whether from the Delphic oracle without or from the Daimon within him; for it cannot, I think, be denied that a general harmony or feeling of congruity does underlie all his ideas of the supernatural. To suppose that his own view of the forbidding whispers he felt within him was in any sense a recognition of revelation as we understand the term, would be a transference into his system of an alien idea irreconcilable with it as a whole. Perhaps his Daimon bears some affinity to the Greek belief in a good or lucky genius which inspired men to fortunate enterprises, with the Sokratic distinction that in his case the impulse was mainly ethical. But I incline to the opinion that it is nothing more than a pronounced and intense subjectivity such as profound reflection combined with a definite tendency of thought may engender in any man.[1] Satisfied that the monitions of a good Being must be good, Sokrates did not require much convincing that a virtuous, unselfish, noble suggestion must needs be divine. Nor would this persuasion be at all affected by a conscious ability to trace the suggestions to his own excogitations, and to identify them as the matured products of his own Thought-evolution. For once granting that what is true and virtuous is divine, the precise origin of any ethical prompting, even if determinable, becomes a matter of secondary importance.[2] If Sokrates expressed himself, while following this self-evolved guidance, as if some *alter ego*, or personality distinct from his own, were the source of his admonitions, this would be quite in har-

[1] Comp. Zeller, *Gesch.* lib. ii. pt. i. p. 69, and Mr. Riddell's learned excursus on τὸ δαιμόνιον in his edition of the *Apology*, Appendix A. See also Hegel's interesting account of the genesis of such a subjective unconscious Intuition. *Gesch. Phil.* vol. ii. pp. 77, 78.

[2] Comp. Xenophon, *Mem.* iv. viii. 11: εὐσεβὴς οὕτως ὥστε μηδὲν ἄνευ τῶν θεῶν γνώμης ποιεῖν.

mony with his habit of expressing his own truths in a popular form. His fellow-citizens would more easily understand an appeal to the Delphic oracle, or to his good genius, than they would a direct assertion of his subjective wisdom, while the results from his own point of view would be identical. Moreover, the clear spiritual intuition, the determined moral self-assertion that Sokrates professed, gave to every precept or prohibition of which he was conscious a pronounced character that they could not have had in the case of ordinary men.

2. Though I have made it the second of his unconditional verities, Sokrates's view of virtue, as must needs be the case with every assertor of absolute morality, established it as the first principle of his faith. Ethical perfection was neither originated by the gods nor was it dependent on their existence or volition; on the contrary, it was their supposed justice, rectitude, and truth that gave them their divine authority, and alone justified human recognition of it. No other conception of that authority would have been possible to the advanced thinkers of Greece in regard of the manifold turpitudes of the Olympian deities. It was only by an *arrière pensée* that assumed Zeus and his fellow-gods to be actuated by principles of rectitude in their dealings with men—whatever their mythology might assert to the contrary—that gave the old creed the vitality it continued to possess in popular opinion. Sokrates as a moral teacher imparted a healthful and much-needed impetus to the thought of Greece by seizing on that fact, and elevating it to the rank of a new truth. If what men really reverenced in the denizens of Olympus was the virtue and goodness supposed to characterise them, it was a proof that in their opinion, though in a latent form, goodness and virtue were superior to the gods. As the gods did not create, neither could they destroy, those supreme moral entities. They were even powerless to modify their definition. The good man is therefore, in the view of Sokrates, the equal, if not the superior, of the gods. He is also superior to fate, that eternal and inevitable destiny to which Zeus himself must perforce submit. No fate can hurt the virtuous man. The worst calamity that could befall him would be his own self-caused declination from the paths of virtue. Wrong-doing is more disgraceful than wrong-suffering; and assuming the existence of a deity, malignant, unscrupulous, and tyrannical, he could not inflict on the good man the least portion of the disgrace that would follow his own voluntary fall from goodness.

A nobler ethical system than might be extracted from the utterances of Sokrates, and which is confirmed by his life and

death, it is impossible to conceive. But his ethical principles sprang in his case, as in that of other great thinkers, from his Nescience. The wreck of his speculation, so far as definitive truth is concerned, gave a new impulse and energy to his practice. Though his physical researches had ended in confessed doubt, though he acknowledged he knew not the truth about the gods, nor about other subjects in which humanity is interested, though his Dialectic itself terminated in a *cul de sac*, though his consequent conviction of Nescience was firm and unalterable, Sokrates had not the least doubt as to the primary and indefeasible obligations of morality. He did not doubt that under any circumstances virtue was preferable to vice, temperance to luxury, chastity to lust, self-sacrifice to selfishness. He might not be able in the complications of varied human relations, and with the flexible and elastic instrumentality of logic, to demonstrate in every instance the reason of the superiority, but of the fact itself he had not the least doubt. The demands of virtue operated on him like the consciousness of bodily wants. Hunger, for instance, though he could not explain the physiological processes induced by eating food, had an inherent imperiousness he could not disregard. Similarly his uncertainty on the subject of the gods or of a future life made no difference in his appreciation of the absolute obligation of virtue and duty.

The conclusion to which Sokrates arrived on this matter he formulated in his well-known dictum, 'Virtue is Knowledge.' In this proposition he expressed the necessary transference to human practice of the energy that could not be satisfactorily applied to speculation and its nugatory results. Not that Sokrates would have been satisfied with an ethical practice apart from self-knowledge. This would have been merely conceited and pretentious conduct, the accidental walking in a straight path by a man who was stone-blind. Man must be disciplined by an insight self-acquired into his actual relation to the problems of existence and to the false-knowledge which claims to interpret them. He must practise the maxim Pythagoras impressed on all his disciples of so many years' apprenticeship to dumbness (*ἀφασία*). He must 'Know himself,' and the nescience that knowledge entails, before his good conduct can possess that flavour of disinterestedness and humility requisite for free moral action; poverty of spirit being, in the judgment of Sokrates, as of Christ, an essential pre-requisite for entry into the kingdom of truth.

But here the question may be asked, What was the Sokratic standard of moral action, and how far is it open to the charge sometimes brought against it of utilitarianism? To me it seems

that Sokrates had in reality two ethical standards: one abstract, the other concrete—the first speculative and ideal, the second practical—but differing from each other in degree not in kind. Supreme justice and righteousness, like the highest truth, he regarded as the exclusive prerogatives of the gods. As human Nescience could not attain the former, so neither could human impotence reach the latter. But in practical life, and in view of the more immediate needs of man, whether as an individual or a unit of the social community, there was extant a rough-and-ready standard of duty sufficient to guide those who submitted to it. Every man knew, *e.g.* what was good for himself, and knew also the kind of action best adapted to secure that good. But this language had the defect of being necessarily ambiguous. Sokrates undoubtedly meant by the good what was beneficial to man's highest interests considered as a rational being born for truth, virtue, and disinterestedness. That the good should have implied his material advantage was an implication utterly opposed to the life and teaching, and I will add the death, of Sokrates; it conflicted especially with his noble maxim that it is better to suffer than do ill. But it is quite conceivable how in the crude superficial comprehension of such disciples as Xenophon, the term 'good,' as an end of human action, might be held to mean material prosperity, and for that reason might have been abused by some of his disciples. While Sokrates, however, maintained that human acts are not ordinarily incapable of determination in accordance with the rule of rectitude, he disavows all attempt to teach speculative ethics. The Sokratic query, 'Is Virtue Teachable?' is truly answered thus: as a theory, No; as a practice, Yes. Here again comes in the Nescience that attaches to all human ratiocination as such. Men must practise virtue, but in its essence virtue is not definable. Friendship, courage, piety—all the other excellences of humanity—are integral parts of a good man's duty; but no verbal ingenuity can devise definitions of those qualities that will meet all the subtle and refined distinctions Dialectic can bring to bear upon them. The elementary truths of arithmetic, *e.g.* such propositions as $2+2=4$, may be commonly acknowledged truths, but the abstractions of the higher mathematics are as indeterminate and uncertain as anything can well be.

What seems rather remarkable in the mental character of Sokrates is that he makes little allowance for minds differently constituted from his own. He could hardly comprehend a code of moral practice so indissolubly joined to abstract dogmas as to be altogether dependent on them. He could not conceive that the

insoluble difficulties of the intellectual problem might with some persons be transferred to the practical duty. If Lysis, *e.g.* cannot define 'courage,' or Euthyphro 'impiety,' this is no reason for doubting the existence either of the one or the other. Truth, in his estimation, was above and beyond all human conception considered as the object of ratiocination. The attempt to find it involved the seeker in an inextricable labyrinth. But of the existence of truth, and of the duty of all mortals to pursue it, he has not the slightest doubt. The difference between a Skeptic who affirms the non-existence of truth, and of another thinker who, asserting its existence, denies that men can ever attain it, might to some persons seem impalpable. But the moral distinction between them is nevertheless very great, and it is mainly this difference that separates Sokrates from his Skeptical successors, Pyrrhôn and Ainesidemos.

But we cannot leave Sokrates's 'unconditional obligation' of morality without observing that in one particular he allows a departure from his ideal of absolute justice so far as to maintain the binding character of even unjust laws or legal decisions when promulgated by competent authority. This opinion—so strikingly illustrated by his own fate—was no doubt mainly grounded on the idea of subordinating the interests of the individual to the welfare of the body politic. It pointed, therefore, in the direction of self-denial; but it is easy to see that an extended application of this theory would make the accidental and changeable laws of a country the real standard of human action to the exclusion of any higher or more permanent rule of conduct. It would seem that the Greek reverence for patriotism was capable of occasionally assuming, even in the mind of her greatest thinker, a predominating form quite inconsistent with his own sublime ideal of 'unconditional morality.'

3. I have already incidentally touched upon the belief of Sokrates in the autonomy of the human reason, and the infallibility that he claims for Dialectic. He did not derive this opinion from any teacher, though it might have been suggested by the Eleatic philosophers. Probably it was the pure spontaneous result of his own self-analysis. A man who has himself experienced the efficiency of any given instrumentality to accomplish a certain purpose does not need the recommendation of another to induce him to adopt it. The introspective tendencies of Sokrates were innate and vigorous, and, whatever the path of inquiry he might have followed for the time, he must sooner or later have come home to the inner circle of his own thought and speculation. Such a return was implied

in his abandonment of physical-science studies. He had thereby ascertained the power of the intellect to analyse and test all supposed truths brought to the bar of its judgment. The extent of that power it would be difficult from the Sokratic standpoint to exaggerate. A knowledge-test that ended in Nescience, an analysis that ceased its functions when nothing was left to analyse, might claim to be the *ne plus ultra* of destructiveness. It was a gun that annihilated the foe, but in the act of firing blew itself up. But of its suicidal tendencies Sokrates took no heed. He knew he could reaffirm as an absolute postulate what Dialectic had destroyed. Perhaps, too, he purposely overlooked them in consideration of the deadly effect of the weapon. False knowledge he deemed so mischievous that any method of destroying it was to be welcomed. Few Skeptics, as we shall find, have been greatly influenced by the reflection that their method must needs include self-destructive elements. Sokrates was aware that his Nescience, like a scorpion, was armed with a deadly sting which might, on emergency, be turned against itself. The paralogism implied in the very phrase 'Knowing nothing but nothing,' and which is expressed in the epigram—

> Nil scis, unum hoc scis; aliquid scis et nihil ergo
> Hoc aliquid nihil est: hoc nihil est aliquid [1]

—had no power to frighten Sokrates from the career of his Skeptical humour. As Coleridge said of ghosts, he had seen too many (paralogisms) to be frightened at them. Nor was it only from his own experience of the power of his elenchus that Sokrates came to regard it as the sole avenue to knowledge. Reflection in another direction convinced him that to men as rational beings no other method of pursuing truth except the enlightened human reason was even conceivable. Whether the method were intrinsically perfect or imperfect, or whether its results were satisfactory or not, it was the only method in human power. Man had no choice but to employ it. Nay, more, if the reason were the sole means of acquiring truth, it was right that it should, if only on that account, be made the most of. Hence it must be employed with vigour, with the most unrestricted freedom, and the most implicit confidence. No limiting dogma must impede its course. No ancient prescription, no authoritative belief, no current definition must claim immunity from its research. All things heavenly and things earthly must be submitted to its sway. Dialectic being 'the nature,' was also the sole ruler, 'of all things.' The wild, lawless manner in which

[1] *Joannis Audoeni Epig.* Bk. iii. No. 191.

Sokrates, animated by these principles, employs his logical weapons has been often animadverted on. Genuine admirers of the Sokratic elenchus have frequently expressed a wish that its author had been more moderate and methodical in its use. But we must not forget that the view of ratiocination those persons maintain is altogether different from that which commended itself to Sokrates. According to them, reason must be employed warily, or its employment will cause mischief. Like fire and water, they consider it a good servant but a bad master. In no respect, therefore, must freedom be conceded to it. All this narrow, suspicious feeling on the subject of the greatest of human faculties was alien to the mind of Sokrates. According to him, Reason was self-existent and autocratic, subject to no law, restrained by no barrier. It occupied the position not of a slave but a mistress. Indeed, to speak of restraining her powers and activities was itself a contradiction, for to what other principle in the internal economy of man could an appeal be made? She was herself not only the supreme but the sole judge in her own court. Accordingly she must needs, by virtue of her autonomy, her independence, her indefeasible right as the sole deliberative principle of humanity, be allowed to conduct her ratiocination in her own way. What Sokrates conceived that way to be, we have already noticed in the 'Dialogues of Search.'

It is easy to blame this unlimited Dialectic, to pronounce it captious and contentious, to assert that the procedure cuts away the ground from beneath all truth. So no doubt it does, and Sokrates himself both admits and contends for this very effect. But we must remember that great minds are great not only in virtue of unusual capacity, but by the possession of multifarious many-sided activities, as well as an inordinate appetite for every kind and amount of truth. They unite in themselves the powers of a magnifying and multiplying glass. They not only see objects larger than ordinary men, but they see them in diversiform aspects. You remember the anecdote in Boswell's 'Life of Johnson,' when Boswell avowed his belief in second-sight. 'The evidence,' he said, 'is enough for me, though not for his (Johnson's) great mind;—what will not fill a quart-bottle will fill a pint-bottle. I am filled with belief.'[1] No doubt the relation described in Boswell's tavern simile was one that existed between Sokrates and his disciples; the definition or idea that was capable of filling the mind of a Lysis or Charmides was totally insufficient to fill his

[1] Coleman's cynical rejoinder may be worth noting as indicating a principle of which Skeptics and Free-thinkers have made large use—'Then cork it up!'

own. But in addition to difference of amplitude, we may say that a great mind differs from a smaller just as a machine adapted for various purposes differs from one whose uses are more limited. To note this versatility in the case of Sokrates we have only to read the 'Dialogues of Search.' I have often thought that one of these dialogues might stand for a verbal portrait, so to speak, of the mind of Sokrates; that the tortuous windings and twistings we find in it represent the varied zigzag movements of his own mind; that his keenness to discover objections, to note ambiguities, mark the zest with which he was accustomed to pursue a controversial theme in his own thought. He is like a zealous hunter in pursuit of some exceedingly wild and cunning game. It is not merely the pursuit when the quarry is in sight that excites him, but the outmatching its stratagems and subterfuges, the hunting it out of secret and unlikely recesses, the unmasking all its tricks, disguises, and pretensions, the complete unveiling of its insidious character—it is in this that the excitement of the chase consists; it is this that constitutes the 'sport' of Sokrates the intellectual hunter, as it does of every genuine sportsman of whatever kind.

Hence what appears to some an irreconcilable dissentience, an obstinate determination not to be convinced, may really have another character. It may be the insatiable craving for absolutely demonstrable and ideal truth—truth free of every sort of objection, or faintest ground of suspicion, truth untainted by imperfection either in itself or in its relation to other truth—that haunts, though, alas! vainly, many a noble human intellect. In other words, it is the yearning of the limited for the illimitable, of the relative for the absolute, of the finite for the infinite. But while Sokrates pursued the search with passionate earnestness, he recognized its futility. The prey was worth the catching, if it only could be caught and held. But still more was it worth the hunting, and the latter was in human power, if not the former. Sokrates himself returns from the chase in triumph, gravely announcing, as its most precious result, the discovery of his inability to achieve supreme success. I have already admitted that Sokrates was aware of the incongruous aspect this result presented to others. Nescience was not far removed from Nihilism. Might it not be possible to push it a stage further and plead his non-knowledge even of his Nescience—thus reducing his intellectual condition to a state of complete vacuity, like that which Hindus and Buddhists, by pursuing similar paths of negation, are wont to attain? Besides, Nescience conflicted with the sovereignty claimed by Dialectic. Sokrates, as we have seen, is so persuaded of the autonomy of

Reason as to attribute to it a volition of its own. But on this point a brother Sophist might have replied, 'How can we be confident that our ratiocinations always point in the direction marked out by infallible reason? Who is to assure us that the path of the logician is under all circumstances a true path?' In controversy the course of the argument is often determined by accidental impulses and spontaneous suggestions. The paths of the intellect, like its desires, are many. How are we to know that a specific conclusion is the only one that true reason can approve? Besides, do not the Sophists continually 'make the worse appear the better cause?' And how would this be possible if all human ratiocination must infallibly evolve truth? Even Sokrates himself is continually warning those with whom he converses to watch him carefully, lest he should play tricks, thereby admitting the flexibility and fallibility of ratiocination. On all sides, therefore, human reason is shown to be illusory and deceptive. But it must be added, this untrustworthy character of human truth, though harmonizing with his own Nescience, does not destroy the confidence of Sokrates in absolute truth. That he still continues to contemplate with an eye of desire and imagination. That remains undisturbed by human imperfection, just as the light of the sun is not affected by shadows thrown by terrestrial objects. Thus in idea Sokrates compensates for the actual imbecility of the human intellect. For if reason is self-annihilated by its product of absolute ignorance, if, being itself the instrument of thought, it destroys thinking, it must nevertheless be affirmed as an unconditional postulate, an intuitional verity transcending and despising demonstration. We are, at any rate, compelled to employ it, while recognizing that it yields us no truth, just as we are to acknowledge the Supreme Being, though his existence is indemonstrable; and to fulfil moral and social duties, though we know that in speculation all such duties and definitions pertaining to them are inconclusive

We are now in a position to determine more accurately the relation which Sokrates bore to other Sophists; in other words, to the general philosophic culture of his time. Firstly, his starting-point was altogether different. The objects of knowledge the Sophists aimed to teach were various—Grammar, Rhetoric, Geometry, &c.; but they were all objective sciences, dealing with supposed theories or facts of the universe. Sokrates, like our own Locke, took human nature as his starting-point. In order to know, he maintained, we must diligently scrutinize the mechanism for acquiring knowledge. Knowledge must direct its primary energies to knowing the knower, and this starting-point must be adopted unreservedly,

and without prejudice to its result whatever it might be. 2. In harmony with this starting-point there was a distinction of method. The Sophists in their origin were allied with the Rhetoricians. The majority taught Rhetoric, and all practised it. They are alluded to in the Platonic Dialogues as being connected with Rhetoric and Poetry. Consequently their lessons were very largely didactic and persuasive. Setting forth their themes in glowing language, they endeavoured to convince their hearers of the truth so affirmed, as well as of the exceptional wisdom of the teacher. The art of Sokrates, on the contrary, consisted in awakening the individual consciousness, and stimulating reflection by raising doubts and forcing men either to solve them or honestly to admit their insolubility. 3. There was also a marked difference in the extent and appreciation of intellectual freedom. Doubtless the Sophists were, as I have already contended, free-teachers. They were far from considering themselves bound by the beliefs or methods they found already in existence. Still they professed to teach sciences, *i.e.* branches of knowledge possessing to a certain extent systematic arrangement and well-defined rules. Teaching as they did for pay, they must needs have professed, whether rightly or wrongly, to impart some definite and tangible attainment. Sokrates, on the other hand, proposed to teach nothing, and that for the best of reasons—he knew nothing. How great soever the value he himself placed on Nescience, he knew that the Athenian public would estimate 'Nothing' at its mere nominal worth. It was in entire consistency with his conviction on this point that he declined to receive even the smallest present if it were offered him in the shape of payment. Indeed, he says that his devotion to his mission, or as he phrases it to the commands of the god, had caused him to neglect his own affairs and had brought him to poverty. 4. On the score of disinterestedness, then, there was a very important distinction between Sokrates and the Sophists. The latter acquired riches and political and social power by their teachings, Sokrates obtained only poverty. The Sophists estimated truth, or what they chose to denominate truth, by its money or market value. Sokrates, who did not pretend to have any truth of his own to communicate, still held that truth and truth-teaching should be free. 5. But the difference just alluded to carried in its train other distinctions. The Sophists taught generally attainments and so far dogmas. They professed to turn out their disciples accomplished debaters, rhetoricians, politicians, &c. Sokrates disclaimed all such pretensions. He who knew nothing was not likely to be able to mould these finished products of human knowledge. All that he inculcated was pure search for truth—investigation for its own

sake without a morbid anxiety as to definitive results, still less a predetermination that they must be of a certain kind. By this teaching Sokrates necessarily took a fuller view of the rights of the individual conscience than was possible to other Sophists. His Eristic was quite free and independent, and he watched over its freedom with an extreme jealousy. Enlisted in the service of no special science, it was bound by no laws except such as were self-imposed; pledged to no dogma, it was able to exercise its activities, and even to indulge its caprices, as it thought fit. Sokrates thus assigned to individual liberty, the rights of self-consciousness, a fulness and vigour it had never as yet attained in Greek philosophy, and in that respect he is far in advance of the Sophists. 6. But as a *per contra*, the moral distinction between them was profound. Both the Sophists and the post-Sokratic Skeptics seem to have agreed that the *only* authoritative sanction for ethical action was the legal enactment or customary rule of the nation or people among whom the individual might chance to dwell. Sokrates, as we saw, took generally the higher and truer principle of absolute virtue, an eternal unconditional obligation binding alike on gods and men. That this sublime conception was not fully realized by the Athenian citizens is probably true, and even if it had been they would have regarded it as a confirmation of his atheism, as being the establishment of an extra-Olympian rule; but to Sokrates himself, perhaps also to the more profound of his disciples, it presented a moral anchorage, wherein he might find refuge from the political and social divergencies he saw in seething commotion around him.

As a result of our comparison, then, we find that, in respect of Skeptical method and free-thought, Sokrates was far in advance of his brother Sophists. When the more unscrupulous among these teachers professed to be able to prove the opposite sides of any given thesis, their boast was rather a claim of personal versatility or argumentative power than an assertion that the contradictories were equally true. Nor were they forced, as Sokrates was, by such antinomies into a confession of Nescience. So far as appears, no Sophist either claimed the attribute of complete ignorance for himself, still less insisted on it as a desirable condition for others. Sokrates's true successor in this respect was Pyrrhôn. Moreover, no one of the Sophists carried Eristic, in the sense not of verbal quibbling but of a rational disputatiousness, to such an extent as Sokrates. Notwithstanding the sneers of some portions of the Platonic Dialogues at the captiousness and puerilities of the Sophists (which, however, may be caricatures), they themselves furnish instances of perverse ratiocination, of transparent fallacies, of deter-

mined logomachy, quite as glaring as any of those we find in the writings of the Sophists or even in the 'sophistical elenchi' of Aristotle.

We cannot, therefore, be surprised that when Aristophanes wished to ridicule the teaching and pretensions of the Sophists (ψυχῶν σοφῶν) he chose Sokrates as a master Sophist,[1] the acknowledged chief of the new school of thinkers, the teacher whose doctrine appeared most dangerous to the well-being of the community. For I see no reason for believing that Aristophanes cherished any personal animosity towards Sokrates, as has been asserted; nor do I think that his caricature of Sokratic teaching exceeds the ordinary limits of dramatic licence. A careful comparison of 'The Clouds' with the Platonic Dialogues shows us that the primary characteristics of his doctrine are the same in both. The supposed natural-science pursuits of Sokrates are, no doubt, extravagantly caricatured in the comedy; but even this is met by his own admission in the 'Apology' of the passionate devotion with which he once pursued them. But the characteristic features of his later thought are also not wanting: *e.g.* his insistence on self-knowledge as a preliminary to conscious ignorance; his stress on contemplation; his fondness for discussion without much regard to its results; his undisguised neologianism; and most of all the Sokratic suspense, which is ridiculed in a variety of ways.[2] Hence, if we are to accept the testimony of the only contemporary writer outside the pale of the Sokratic circle, Sokrates was regarded as a Skeptic and Sophist at least a quarter of a century before his death, and that on the strength of doctrinal peculiarities to which he himself laid claim. Nor do we find anything in the narrative of his trial and condemnation which proves that the popular estimate of him had at all altered since 'The Clouds' was first published. When he himself alludes in the Platonic 'Apology' to the indictment of Meletos and Anytos, and to the common fame on which it was grounded, he employs the precise terminology which an Athenian would have used in speaking of the Sophists. 'Sokrates is an evil-doer, and an inquisitive person, who searches into things

[1] *Clouds*, line 94; comp. lines 360, 361, and *passim*.

[2] *E.g.* as a condition of being suspended in baskets, walking in the air, &c. So Sokrates recommends his disciple to let his mind loose into the air, like a cockchafer with his leg tied to a string. Indeed, the condition of suspended baskets is put forward by Aristophanes as the central teaching of the Sokratic thought-shop. Comp. *e.g.* lines 868, 869—

Νηπύτιος γάρ ἐστ' ἔτι
καὶ τῶν κρεμαθρῶν οὐ τρίβων τῶν ἐνθάδε.

under the earth and in heaven. He also makes the worse appear the better cause, and teaches the aforesaid doctrines to others.' His accusers too, we must recollect, were declared opponents of the Sophists, and there is little doubt they thought that in impeaching Sokrates before the Dikastery they were striking a blow at the sophistical spirit and method so widely prevalent in Athens. Nor does it appear to me probable that this contemporary estimate of Sokrates as a Sophist and Skeptic was at all likely to be modified in the popular mind by his more positive moral teaching. The judgment of the many-headed is based not on the profounder principles or esoteric instruction, but on the surface thoughts and sayings of those whom it criticizes. Even allowing that Sokrates spoke in the eloquent terms Plato has preserved for us, of the divine nature of truth, virtue, and wisdom, yet if he regarded them as intuitional verities, or else defined them as existing in perfection only with the gods, we can easily understand how these sublime truths soared too high for popular comprehension, or were regarded as too ideal for practical utility. All 'categorical imperatives' and intuitional affirmations, when put forward as makeshifts for speculative impotence, are apt to be looked upon with suspicion. The 'unideal' Athenian (to use Coleridge's expressive word) might have retorted against Sokrates, as some German Philistines did against Kant, 'We understand your skeptical principles, your attitude of suspense, your antinomies of the reason, the radical impotence of the intellect which is the outcome of your system, but we know nothing of your transcendental verities and your unconditional obligations. These are *ex hypothesi* purely subjective, a standard of truth or conduct you may haply possess, but which you cannot even expect to communicate to us.' Without some such admission of the esoteric and intransmissible character of those ultimate bases on which Sokrates placed his ethical and religious teaching, we seem unable to account for the full extent of the ill-fame that attached to his ordinary doctrine. In the superficial judgment of Athenian philistinism there was little to counterbalance the destructive effects of the elenchus. After removing from their immediate ken the gods of Olympus, and destroying not a few home-made idols in the shape of hasty and unverified conclusions, it left them with the barren and unsatisfactory compensation of Nescience.

We must now turn to the painfully interesting close of the Sokratic mission.

For about half of his long life (70 years), Sokrates had diligently pursued his ungrateful office of public censor and critic of

his fellow-citizens, urged on both by an impulse he counted divine and by an intense passion for what might be termed 'mental vivisection.' Day after day he reiterated his exhortations to self-examination, mental discipline, and spiritual candour. Day after day he placed his unfortunate victims on the rack of his elenchus and watched their impotent wriggles with something of the grim sympathy with which Isaac Walton contemplated the struggles of the worm he had impaled on his fish-hook 'in such a way as if he loved it.' Daily were the Silenus visage, the snub nose, the goggle eyes and protrusive lips of the Athenian 'Inquisitor-general' to be seen in the market, the gymnasia, and wherever else men were wont to congregate. With execrable iteration the Athenians heard him avow the 'Je ne sçais pas' which he proclaimed as the concentration of all human wisdom. Again and again they heard him demonstrate the futility of popular notions and commonly received definitions. No person, no institution, no opinion could be considered safe from his covert irony or open satire. From its very nature, the elenchus covered the whole ground of human thought and action. Just as an English Skeptic (Gibbon) ridiculed the essential absurdity of hereditary government, so Sokrates with all his patriotism could not keep the keen edge of his Dialectic from vivisecting the existing government of Athens, and exposing among other things the unwisdom of electing archons by the vote of the majority, *i.e.* the ignorant and unthinking. In this, as in other cases, his elenchus occasionally trespassed beyond the bounds which his own sentiment and feeling of propriety would have assigned it. His own conceptions of Olympian deities, *e.g.* differed widely from those generally current; and yet, although he gave 'the gods' external deference for political and social reasons, he could not help expressing himself sometimes in a sarcastic manner as to their claim. But above all other causes for the unpopularity of Sokrates we must place the general character of his 'mission,' and the determination with which he pursued it. It entailed unremitting attacks on the self-complacency of his fellow-citizens. It stripped them of their vaunted knowledge and wisdom, and tended to show them up to each other as foolish, prejudiced, and ignorant. His own assumption of Nescience, so far from really lessening, must have increased and confirmed the antipathy of the Athenians. For was it not true that his ignorance was triumphant over their supposed knowledge, so that their actual condition was demonstrated to be one inferior even to ignorance? There was a peculiar aggravation in seeing their tenets and ideas put to the rout by an instrument ostensibly so impotent and

unworthy. Their sensations were like those we may suppose the Philistines felt when they saw their gigantic champion succumb to no worthier adversary than a shepherd's boy, armed with a sling. Had Sokrates chosen to attack their knowledge from the standpoint of superior wisdom openly claimed as such, they might have borne with his preaching. As it was, not only the teacher, but his theme, and his mode of presenting it, were all alike distasteful.

Besides, his choice of a standpoint removed by the greatest conceivable distance from ordinary modes of conviction discloses another element of his general character, and one hardly conducive to popularity—I mean his contempt for the 'vox populi,' his regal disdain of the unthinking crowd. This is, I fear, a fault—or shall I say an idiosyncrasy?—pertaining to all the highest thought, whether dogmatic or skeptic. We shall have many examples of it among the Skeptics on our list. Though Sokrates intermingled freely among his fellow-citizens, his familiar discourses were limited to the few (not necessarily of noble birth) who were capable of understanding and appreciating them. Perhaps he would have applied to his followers his own proverb, 'Many are the wand-bearers, few are the mystics.' The particular knowledge on which he most insisted, introspective knowledge, was of a peculiarly unpopular kind, and would have sufficed of itself to place an impassable gulf between him and the unidea'd mass of Athenian citizens.

With all these elements of discord as regards his environment, we cannot, I think, feel surprised, not only at the growing unpopularity of Sokrates, but at its attaining such a climax as it unhappily reached. There was hardly a prejudice, a sentiment, a belief in the Athenian mind on which he had not placed the iron foot of his ruthless logic. Though he himself was actuated by the purest motives, though his devotion to truth and earnestness in its search were above suspicion, though his life was blameless, the enmity he provoked can scarcely be pronounced either strange or unreasonable. Whatever the intrinsic value of his mission, and the undeniable importance of the self-knowledge it inculcated, it soared too far above the nature, not only of Athenians, but of humanity, to give it much chance of success; it postulated a reverence for truth, and a determination at all hazards to acquire and realize it, which are among the rarest attributes of mankind. It demanded a single-hearted devotion to intellectual freedom, which is unhappily only the possession of the few. As a free-thinker he arrayed against him all the forces of intolerance, dogmatism, and

antiquated prejudice, and his mission was so far a self-imposed sentence of human malignity and death.

Nor was the extreme danger that attended his mission hidden from himself. Every free-thinker who has set himself as a life-task to cope with prevailing and injurious dogma has foreseen the peril he must necessarily incur. Sokrates, like Ramus, Giordano Bruno, and Vanini—not to mention the supreme instance of Christ Himself—had a distinct presage of his coming fate. Here at least his customary nescience was transformed into prescience. To use his apt illustration, he was in the position of a physician who had long been accustomed to administer to children nauseous and bitter draughts—not a few of them *emetics*, I may add—and who was now tried by a jury of his thoughtless patients. That the children, with little knowledge or regard for the real service done to them, should wish to be rid both of 'the doctor' and his emetic powders, was both child-like and natural. When they once had him in their power he could not but anticipate they would adjudge him to death. From the very nature of his 'mission,' therefore, I am persuaded that the unpopularity of Sokrates was a sentiment of long growth, and that his trial and condemnation was by no means the sole instance of the malevolence of the Athenians towards him. The 'Clouds' of Aristophanes clearly show that twenty-four years before his trial Sokrates was the butt of popular obloquy and ridicule, and that the contemptuous indifference with which he was wont to bear this abuse was a feature of his character so strongly marked as to be thought a fitting subject of parody by the popular comic poet.[1] In this respect the Sokrates of 'The Clouds' is undoubtedly the Sokrates of the Platonic 'Apology,' and his equanimity under the petty insults of the streets is but a lower degree of the calm philosophical serenity which defied the Dikasts, heaped scorn on his accusers, and despised the threat of death.[2]

The trial and condemnation of Sokrates is an oft-told tale in the history of philosophy. The theme of so many variously gifted pens, it has been considered from every possible point of view, and narrated in every conceivable style of literary art. Our present concern with it depends on the circumstance that it is a martyrdom in the cause of free-thought. It occupies a foremost place in the long list of outrages which intolerance and dogmatism have perpetrated against humanity. We shall have to compare Sokrates before the

[1] *Clouds*, line 412, &c., also 910, &c.

[2] The classical scholar will hardly need to be reminded of Cicero's eloquent description of Sokrates's 'liberam contumaciam.' *Tusc. Disp.* lib. i. cap. 29.

Athenian Dikasts with Ramus in the clutches of the infuriated butchers of St. Bartholomew; with Giordano Bruno confronting the Roman Inquisition; with Vanini before the bigoted parliament of Toulouse. We shall thence learn that obscurantism and intellectual tyranny are not confined to any age or people, creed or religion; we shall perceive how the pretensions of arrogant and exclusive dogma exercise a malignant influence wherever they find a sphere of operation. Among the most enlightened and tolerant nation of antiquity it compels a Sokrates to drink the cup of hemlock, while it turns even the sweet wine of Christian charity to vinegar and consigns the noblest and rarest intellects to prison, the rack, and the stake.

From what we have seen of the nature of the Sokratic 'mission,' we may readily anticipate the charges preferred against him by his accusers Meletos, Anytos, and Lycon. They are in fact the stereotyped charges made against Skeptics and free inquirers in all ages; or, as Sokrates himself describes them, 'the commonplace impeachments which are made against all philosophers indifferently.' First there was a general charge of neologianism, 'Sokrates was an inquisitive person who searched into things in heaven and earth, and made the worse appear the better cause.' It would have been difficult for Sokrates to have met the charge of 'searching' with an open denial. Whatever might be its illegality or obnoxiousness to Athenians, it was indubitably 'a true bill.' Sokrates, to his immortal honour, was and had been throughout life a confirmed searcher. There was no phase of physical or metaphysical knowledge he had not attempted to explore. He was a born inquirer whom no difficulty arrested and no ordinary result satisfied. Search for truth had been his sole life's work; to pursue it he had neglected his occupation, lost his property, and was involved in the straits of poverty and privation. Nay, it was a veritable synonym to him of life itself. Take away his right of exploration in whatever direction he thought fit, and existence were not worth retaining at the price. He accordingly details before his judges what he considered the primary, heaven-suggested impulse of his search, and expatiates on the method he pursued and the results he attained. The conclusion could hardly have been agreeable to his judges. Sokrates had gone forth among his fellow-townsmen to discover their knowledge, their wisdom, the truths they claimed to possess. With his Diogenes lantern, the elenchus, he had explored the streets of Athens in broad daylight to find a true man, a man whose conscious knowledge was on the exact level of his real acquirement. But, alas! Sokrates, as

we saw, had returned empty: the statesmen knew nothing; the poets knew nothing; the rhetoricians knew nothing, even of the arts they professed to know; the mechanics could tell him little beyond their manual craft. Knowledge that he could realize and substantiate did not apparently exist. But though Sokrates returned empty as to real knowledge, he found everywhere plenty of false knowledge, plenty of its conceit, its arrogance, its insufferable dogmatism. No doubt some of the 507 Dikasts had themselves been the objects of the elenchus, and could hardly have been gratified by hearing the barren results of its operation put forward so nakedly. In an ironical form Sokrates had preferred a countercharge of ignorance, pretentiousness, and conceit against most of his fellow-citizens. This, as a mode of rebutting the indictment preferred against himself, was not likely to better his position in the eyes of his judges. To the allegation, 'You are a curious, inquiring person, searching into things in heaven and earth,' Sokrates, in effect, though with ironical deference, replies, 'And you, for the most part, are a set of conceited, contented Dogmatists, mere antiquated obscurantists, ignorant both of the knowledge you claim to possess and of the ignorance you actually do possess.' Clearly the only adequate defence in the eyes of his judges—at least it would have been so esteemed by them—would have been a humble apology for his supposed misdemeanour, a promise to forswear for the future his unfortunate zetetic propensities; and instead of continuing a search that led to nothing, to content himself like the rest of mankind with the possession of imaginary truths. The model Athenian, from the standpoint of the Dikasts, was the uninquiring citizen, the man who plodded on blindly in the old paths, who received implicitly the convictions, truths, and opinions of his forefathers. What need was there of new ideas or new methods? Did not the old suffice to create the men of Marathon and Salamis? to advance Attica to the foremost state of Greece? —the precise line of argument, in short, which the advocates of mental stagnation and philistinism employ in all ages. Couched in varied phraseology, it formed the common impeachment of Christ before the Jewish Council, of Luther before the Diet of Worms, of Bruno and Galileo before the Inquisition, of Abelard before the Councils of Soissons and Sens. As a loyal witness for truth Sokrates declined to apologize for attempting to discover it, and refused to promise to forego such attempt. To the charge of neologianism, therefore, he returned the proud and defiant plea of 'guilty,' coupled with the admission that if released on this occasion he would at once take up again the obnoxious employ-

ment of extorting truth from whatever person or quarter he thought likely to yield it.

Nor must we forget that Sokrates's plea for search was hardly strengthened in the judgment of the Dikasts by the result he professed to have gained. Nescience must have seemed to them an anomalous and perilous outcome of truth-investigation. The ordinary inquirer starting with Dogmatist preconceptions does not dream of finding the issue of his search to be Nothing. He starts with the determination to find something, some positive infallible truth, and as he is not content without discovering it, it is needless to say he generally succeeds. To Sokrates, however, the interests of Truth and Reason were paramount. Wherever these led he was determined to follow. If they issued in the commonly received convictions and opinions of his time he would acknowledge them. If they pointed in another dogmatic direction he would still follow; and—hardest alternative of all—if they resulted in a conviction of Nescience, he would accept it. But this was a single-minded devotion to truth of which his judges had no conception. The only construction they could have placed on Nescience was to regard it as a dangerous deficiency of ordinary conviction, or, what was the same thing, of all truth. Little sympathy can the avowed Skeptic ever expect from the Dogmatist. They represent not only different but opposite mental conditions, and we might apply to any attempt to find a common bond of sympathy between them the Scotch proverb, 'It's ill talking between a fu' man and a fastin'.'

But in addition to the general charge of 'searching' was that of employing Sophistical methods. This was the current charge against the Sophists, and although often alleged against Sokrates he does not appear to have taken any pains to repel or even deny it. In one respect the charge was indubitably false. Sokrates had never prostituted his Dialectic to the service of Falsehood or of Vice. On the contrary, it was in his estimation an instrument of and preparation for virtue. At the same time his method was entirely free, so free that it might easily be wrested to pervert the cause of truth and justice. This freedom seemed dangerous to the Dikasts. Like other timorous Dogmatists, they were unable to distinguish it from licence. They failed to grasp the Sokratic idea that Free-thought and Dialectic constituted the most invaluable heritage of humanity, which though liable, like any other useful agency, to abuse, was not on that ground to be despised. Sokrates had a wholesome conviction that no amount of speculative freedom could permanently injure truth. He was fully persuaded of the

inherent power of the reason to rectify, if need were, its own abuses and perversions. That the interest of Truth could be served by a ratiocination bound down by laws, circumscribed by formulas, and fenced in by restrictions of every kind, seemed to him a proposition at once anomalous and untenable. He had the same implicit confidence in Truth as most jurists have in the inherent, self-asserting, self-rectifying power of justice. Eminent English advocates, with considerable influence over juries, like Follett or Scarlett, might certainly be thought open to the charge of 'making the worse appear the better cause;' but were such an accusation actually preferred against them, they would have treated it with the same contempt as Sokrates. They would point out that an advocate's duty to his clients was paramount over every other consideration. They would urge that juries were not so utterly destitute of common-sense as to allow themselves to be deceived by absolutely worthless ratiocination. They would submit that precisely the same unrestricted freedom was open to their adversaries in the causes contested. Justice, they would argue, was still free and unrestricted, notwithstanding their *ex parte* argumentation. No doubt an outsider might instance cases in which a chance miscarriage of justice might be traced to a specious and one-sided argument, but even this contingency would be nullified by the twofold reply—first, that complete infallible justice is, under any conceivable theory of the advocate's duty, unattainable; second, that examples of such miscarriage would be more frequent when the ratiocination on either side was restrained and forced than when it was perfectly free. But if these considerations serve to exonerate the advocate in making the most of his causes, *à fortiori* are they available in the case of a free-thinking philosopher like Sokrates, who refused to be bound by any prescribed line of argument of whatever kind. An advocate is of course a partisan, and Sokrates regarded the standpoint of a partisan as conflicting necessarily with that of a free-inquirer. But both the advocate's and the Sokratic point of view are alike in this, they are based on a strong conviction that Truth must ultimately prevail and vindicate her rights. The partisanship of the one, the unrestrained liberty of the other, are equally unable to compromise or injure fatally the indefeasible rights of the human reason. Hence, though not wholly impossible, it is improbable to the very verge of impossibility that the worse cause should be able to assert a final and invincible superiority over the better.

II. But Sokrates's position as a Sophist and Free-thinker did not constitute the most formidable item in the charge preferred

against him. He was also guilty, said Meletos, of 'Impiety'—that grave indefinite charge which was the analogue in ancient Athens of the 'heterodoxy' and 'heresy' of ecclesiastical Christianity. He did not regard as deities those whom the State so regarded. We have already noticed Sokrates's answer to this accusation, and have seen what were, so far as we can gather them, his real views on the subject-matter of theology. He limited his defence to declaring his general belief in a supreme being or supernatural agency, whom he does scruple to designate by the ordinary appellation of 'the gods,' but declines to express himself more fully on the subject. His own view, as we know, was opposed on the one hand to the anthropomorphic conceptions of the old mythology, on the other to the materialism of some thinkers of the school of Anaxagoras, and in all probability approximated nearly to some form of theism. How far he extended an outward show of deference to the national deities we are not able to say. Xenophon's conception of him as an habitual worshipper at all the popular shrines seems evidently exaggerated. As the master-thinker in the 'thought shop' burlesqued by Aristophanes, he is described as having given up the Olympian deities and substituted the physical powers of nature. With due allowance for caricature, I think we may accept this as one phase in the mental evolution of Sokrates, and I also think the reasoning by which the 'Clouds' are proved to rain and thunder have a strong flavour of the genuine Sokratic elenchus. But his abandonment of natural science for metaphysical studies seems to have imparted a more spiritual impulse to his ideas of deity, and thenceforward he conceived of it as the Divine Reason, the supreme power whose aims and tendencies are for righteousness, and whose image and attributes have their reflected likeness in the soul of every righteous man.[1]

On the ground of theology, then, the accusation of Meletos must be held to be true. Sokrates does not esteem as true divinities the gods of the Athenian populace. Had it lain in his power, he would at least have idealized the crude notions of the old mythology. He is therefore a protestant and a reformer, an assertor of liberty, of free religious thought as against antiquated dogma. He takes his place in history among the dissentients, for conscience' and reason's sake, from widely accepted modes of religious belief—with Luther, with Giordano Bruno, with John Huss, and the many other representatives of protestantism and free-thought. And we may make this admission more ungrudgingly since in many respects the idea

[1] Comp. on this point Sokrates's own theological admissions in the *Euthyphron*, *Gorgias*, and *Apology*.

that Sokrates had of deity bears a remarkable resemblance to that taught by Christ Himself. It possesses both its spirituality and its ethical character. That Sokrates made no attempt to formulate his conception of God in precise terms may well be ascribed partly to the instinctive reluctance of every great thinker to attempt a definition of the undefinable, partly because a definition of deity would have conflicted with his standpoint of Nescience. This, as the final outcome of his investigations, must be preserved at all costs, as the master-key to every portion both of his life and teaching.

III. But the alleged disastrous effect of Sokrates's free-teaching took in the indictment the form of a charge of corrupting the Athenian youth. How early this accusation was made against the Sokratic elenchus is shown by the 'Clouds' of Aristophanes. It was indeed a common indictment against all the Sophists, and the fact of its occupying a foremost place in the gravamen of Meletos and his fellow-prosecutors shows how Sokrates was generally identified with those teachers in the popular mind. The manner in which Sokrates meets this charge is noteworthy. In the 'Apology' he merges it with the other accusation of not worshipping the gods of the country, while by Xenophon he is represented as waiving it from the specific points on which Meletos lays stress. He undoubtedly treats it with a contempt which has always appeared strange to his commentators. The true explanation of this conduct is not, in my opinion, far to find. No feature is more strongly impressed on the character of Sokrates than his conviction of the existence and inherent prowess of truth, as well as of the inborn capacities of the human mind for its investigation. Fully possessed with this belief, he had not the least fear that the mind of any ingenuous youth could be morally corrupted by his cross-examination. His undaunted confidence in truth he impliedly contrasts with the suspicions of his accusers concerning it. His belief in humanity, the thinking portion of it, was as boundless as theirs was contracted. That any injury could arise from free speculative inquiry, was as absurd as to suppose that a man of healthy constitution could be injured by taking abundant exercise. In this respect Meletos and Anytos were the Skeptics, not himself. Like all dogmatic obscurantists, they distrusted truth, regarded every free mode of investigating it with suspicion, had no belief in human progress, would fain make the human intellect march in chains lest by any possibility it might wander from its appointed path. To Sokrates such a mental attitude was inconceivable, and not unnaturally he treated it with a contempt perhaps somewhat

beyond its deserts; for with due allowance for the pure disinterestedness of Sokrates's noble trust in truth, virtue, and humanity, one can hardly help suggesting the question how weak, unstable, immature, unprincipled intellects were likely to fare after his teaching. That some of his hearers were forward in asserting their independence of paternal and other restraints, we are told by Aristophanes and Xenophon. Probably such weaklings were in a very large minority, indeed his own appeal before the Dikastery is a sufficient proof that this was really the case, and Sokrates, pressed with the objection, might well have replied that no possible method of teaching could be devised which might not in isolated cases and peculiar circumstances act prejudicially on its recipients. Certainly the examples adduced of Kritias and Alkibiades out of the many pupils who had come under the influence of Sokrates could hardly have been deemed, except by political adversaries, a cogent proof of the pernicious nature of his teachings. Besides, the implicit trust which Sokrates had in humanity, as well as his indifference to the alleged mischievous effects of his elenchus, must also be attributed to his belief that the tendencies of human nature were towards good rather than evil. His proposition, 'No man is voluntarily evil,' however questionable to us, was a leading principle of his thought and action. Indeed, it is only another mode of asserting the identity of virtue with knowledge, and vice with ignorance. With these convictions, Sokrates was not likely to be alarmed by practical ill-consequences incidentally resulting from his teaching. But what, it might be asked, were the precise effects contemplated by Sokrates as the legitimate products of his Dialectic upon the youth of Athens? An instructive answer to this question is furnished by his remark before the Dikasts as to the treatment he desired for his sons when he was dead. He wished them to be submitted to the same pitiless analytic to which he himself submitted his youthful disciples whenever they appeared to care for other things more than virtue, or seemed to think too highly of themselves. Whence it is clear that Sokrates imagined his elenchus adapted for the twofold purpose—(1) of inducing Nescience, and thereby humility and caution, in speculation; (2) of directly promoting virtue in practice. The former result we can have no difficulty in understanding. It is merely the inculcation of self-denial, the conviction of ignorance, and the stern repression of dogmatic assertion which are initiatory stages of most systems of teaching, whether dogmatic or Skeptical. A genuine persuasion of Nescience is with most persons not only a preparation for but a stimulus to the acquirement of knowledge, and to attain it in some

form or other is therefore a common aim both of philosophers and religious teachers, whatever might be their difference of opinion as to the extent to which the feeling of mental vacuity is to be cherished, or the manner in which it is to be filled up. More difficult is the practical bearing of the question—Nescience regarded as a propædeutic to virtue. Our more positive habits of thought have made it difficult to comprehend how the consciousness of ignorance could, in the way supposed by Sokrates, Pyrrhôn, and other thinkers, have contributed to ethical action. That the idea was not confined to the Greeks is shown by its prevalence among Hindu thinkers as well as Christian mystics. Perhaps a few considerations may enable us to discern the sequence of thought, if not to appreciate its importance.

1. We must remember that the consciousness of Nescience operates in practical life as in speculation by engendering a feeling of distrust and dissatisfaction, and a desire to escape from it, either by the road of independent moral practice—the Skeptical road, or by attaining and accumulating positive knowledge-results—the dogmatic road. In the former case moral conduct—the performance of obvious duty—may receive enhanced consideration from the reflection that it is the only road possible to man, the sole alternative of man's acknowledged impotence in speculation. This is certainly the *rationale* of the stress which not only Greek philosophers, but modern thinkers like Spinoza and Kant, placed upon Ethical action.

2. Sokrates is satisfied of the efficacy of introspection and perpetual self-analysis in counteracting vicious tendencies. Once a youth could be induced to proceed in the path of γνῶθι σεαυτόν, to watch diligently and discriminate accurately the process of ratiocination, the play of passion, the way in which actions are evolved from motives, the inborn bias of individual idiosyncrasies both of thought and conduct, the whole working, in short, of the machinery within him; once he could be persuaded to hunt out and unmask the pretences, false assumptions, plausible semblances beneath which human thought and action so often hide their real character, the less inclination would he manifest for pursuing blindly the paths of vice. This was only another form of St. Paul's antagonism between flesh and spirit. Sokrates undoubtedly maintained that if a man 'walked in the spirit, he would not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.' This opinion was also in complete harmony with his identification of vice with ignorance—the uncultured and thoughtless apathy that took no cognizance of its real state, and therefore took no heed to reform it.

3. It would contribute to virtuous conduct by inducing a state of intellectual and moral honesty, by substituting self-knowledge—the only knowledge possible to humanity—for ignorance, sincerity for deceit, and truthfulness for falsehood. No virtuous conduct or moral excellence could proceed from those impure sources, and the endeavour to extirpate them, the aim of the Sokratic mission, was the best service he could render to morality. Sokrates was here taking up the position of a preacher who insists that a consciousness of shortcoming is itself a distinct advance on the road of reformation and practical righteousness.

4. Nor was the social effect of his teaching less in inducing a proper value by the only agency capable of making it, of individual worth and attainment, and thus determining in the consciousness of the individual the exact relation which he as a unit of the social system bore to all the rest. Pretentious ignorance was, in the opinion of Sokrates, not only an individual but a political vice. The man who thought he knew what he actually did not know was a source of danger to the State. We may readily believe that in the recent political changes that had taken place in the government of Athens there was no lack of special instances which served to confirm his opinion, though with his customary deference to the existing government he did not care to allude to them pointedly. At any rate, he was convinced that Nescience was a better bond of cohesion between one man and another than arrogant science. Theoretically, at least, it was a leveller. In a nation of Skeptics—of men whose conviction of ignorance was a ruling principle in their lives—no man could with any show of reason attempt to domineer over another. Tyrannies and misgovernments were the baleful progeny of vaunted wisdom and baseless science, not of humble conscious ignorance.

But the ostensible issues of Sokrates's trial as contained in the charges of Meletos and in the reply of the Platonic Apology must not shut our eyes to its real significance. It was no question of transient interest that was being tried before the Dikastery. As Aristotle and other clear-sighted contemporaries saw, it was philosophy that was really arraigned in the person of one of the noblest of her sons.[1] It was the right of free-thought, the claim of the human reason to exercise its powers in whatever direction it chose, without limit or hindrance of any kind save those imposed by its own laws, that was contested by the accusers of Sokrates. In

[1] Aristotle quotes from a Sokratic apology by an anonymous rhetorician the words: *μέλλετε δὲ κρίνειν οὐ περὶ Σωκράτους ἀλλὰ περὶ ἐπιτηδεύματος, εἰ χρὴ φιλοσοφεῖν. Rhet.* ii 18.

short, he is the representative of a cause, that of intellectual freedom, of religious liberty, of human progress, and it is this fact that gives to his trial, condemnation, and death the peculiar sacredness and importance they have always had. The questions then tried in Athens and resolved by the calm, unwavering courage of Sokrates, were of paramount interest to humanity at large. Was it right that men should use their reason? Was it right to avow honestly the results of life-long and patient research? Was it right under any circumstances to dissent from generally received beliefs? These were some of the latent issues of the trial considered from the standpoint of philosophy.

Nor were these issues of less importance regarded from the point of view of religion. Sokrates, like other free-thinkers on our list, was really a martyr for religious liberty and a victim of dogmatic intolerance. Neither his philosophical Skepticism nor the political enmity he had provoked contributed so much to his condemnation as his heterodoxy.[1] He had dared to ignore the national deities, and to ascribe divine authority to other and more human agencies. His accusers were able to appeal to the powerful sentiment of religious prejudice, and the pretended deference but real contempt with which Sokrates encountered the charge was hardly likely to impress the Dikasts with his innocence. Notwithstanding the free speculation current among the thinkers and higher sections of Athenian society, Zeus was still the sovereign deity of Greece, and a worshipper of Zeus in his popular mythological presentation Sokrates did not even pretend to be. We might therefore say that Sokrates was sacrificed as a victim to the manes of the moribund deities of Olympus.

In short, the real issue between Sokrates and his enemies was between enlightenment and human progress on the one hand, and the intellectual stolidity commonly known as philistinism on the other. Reasoned discussion on every topic and in every direction constituted for him the chief good of human existence. It was a duty that had the sanction not only of personal idiosyncrasy, of the general reason of humanity, but also of religion. To stifle inquiry, to repress the innate inquisitiveness of the Reason, he regarded as more than an intellectual crime, it was a veritable act of sacrilege. The outcome of enlightened Nescience, in which it resulted in his own case, had received the approval of the deity. It was the Nirvana which he regarded as the highest attainable point of human exploration. That all enlightenment should be

[1] Comp. the allegations put into his mouth in the earlier part of the *Euthyphron*.

attended with drawbacks, that the tree of knowledge should open men's eyes to their nakedness, was both natural and reasonable. An Eden of uninquiring innocence and inexperience would have been no paradise for him. On the contrary, this was what his enemies deprecated and feared. An inquiry into the nature of the gods, into the source and authority of popular notions on virtue, impiety, courage, was equivalent in their estimation to atheism, and the denial of all distinction between vice and virtue. Besides, where would the daring investigator cease? What was to be reputed sacred and inviolable from the profane grasp of an elenchus so audacious, so omnivorous, so pitiless? Remove the old landmarks of the belief of their ancestors, and irreligion and immorality must needs run riot through the State. The gods would no longer be safe in Olympus. The laws would no longer be obeyed, the authority of parents would be set at nought. Social restraints of every kind would disappear. So argued in good faith the enemies of Sokrates, the representatives of Athenian obscurantism. They are thus the prototypes of men common enough in every age of the world, who see in each extension of freedom a source of danger both to the individual and the common weal; who are suspicious of all unrestrained research, of every novel discovery, of every attempt at intellectual emancipation. Sokrates before the Athenian Dikastery occupied precisely the same position as Giordano Bruno and Galileo before the Roman Inquisition. In all such cases of bigotry and fanaticism there is no question as to the conscientious motives of the perpetrators, the only doubt relates to their wisdom and far-sightedness. They seem animated by the deepest distrust of humanity and, what is of graver import, of human reason. In part they are misled by the fallacy common to all dogmatists of enforcing on others the limits and conditions they find necessary for themselves: and as their sole idea of freedom is bondage; of religion, blind adherence to unverified beliefs; of morality, external restrictions of a narrow and cramping nature, it cannot be wonderful that their ideals do not attract freer and more generous natures. The Athenian Dikasts could not have been brought to acknowledge that Sokrates with his Nescience and elenchus stood on an infinitely higher platform of truth than themselves; that he was more religious in his belief in divine agencies, in his persuasion that deity symbolised the highest justice and righteousness, than they were in their worship of Zeus, Hêrê, and Aphroditê; that he was far more ethical in his conviction of absolute morality than they could possibly be, guided only by customary restraints and human enactments.

I have thus attempted a rough sketch of the position which Sokrates, as an avowed free-thinker and Skeptic, occupied before his judges. The main features of his defence, assuming it to have agreed in substance with the Platonic Apology, are indifference and defiance. The former we may take as the practical analogue of the intellectual suspense he prescribed in philosophy. The key-note of the 'Apology,' like the final chord in a strain of solemn music, seems to me the expressive words with which it concludes: 'The hour of departure has arrived, and we go our ways—I to die and you to live. Which is better, God only knows.'[1]

The sublime indifference to his fate here disclosed sheds a flood of reflected light on the mind of the great thinker. It denotes the calm self-possession, the unruffled composure of a man who has long resolved on what he considers his highest duty, and is determined to follow it at all costs. It reveals a profound conviction that no evil from any source, human or divine, can harm the good man. He is no more terrified by the uncertainties of the next world than he has been by the insoluble problems of this. So far as in him lies, he will explore the former with the same eager intentness, the same philosophical serenity, the same zeal for truth, that he brought to bear on terrestrial questions. He has attained that unmoved equanimity in adverse circumstances which after Skeptics believed to be one direct outcome of their teaching. The elevation above mundane considerations which Aristophanes had burlesqued so many years before is now manifested in a peculiarly noble manner in the supreme hour of his fate. For the same reason, he defies his enemies and challenges their hostility, not in any arrogant, obtrusive manner, but with the calm intrepidity which is the result of long and intense self-concentration. Were it true, as some persons suppose, that the manner in which a man encounters death is a test of the motive principles that actuated his life, few could claim superiority over the unrestrained Dialectic, the conscious Nescience, the absolute verities which sustained Sokrates before the Dikasts, and nerved his hand to receive the cup of poison.

The narrative of his condemnation we need not stop to particularize. Out of 501 Dikasts 220 had voted for sparing his life, a number which, considering his unpopularity, much surprised him. He was condemned to death on the day after that on which the vessel had been despatched to Delos, on the periodical theoric mission. Until its return no State criminal could be executed.

[1] Jowett's trans. i. p. 356.

For thirty days, therefore, Sokrates was kept in prison, and there he employed himself with his accustomed serenity in making attempts (the first in his life) at poetical composition, and in philosophical discussions with his friends. At last the ship returned from her sacred voyage, and Sokrates had to prepare for death. His manner of doing this is described by Plato in language of such exquisite and simple pathos that I shall take the liberty of reading to you from Professor Jowett's translation[1] the paragraph that recounts it. This will be the more fitting as we shall have to compare with his martyrdom that of other free-thinkers on our list. His friend Kriton had been urging Sokrates to defer drinking the cup of hemlock till later in the day, but the philosopher refuses, and requests that it might be brought to him at once. The story then proceeds; the narrator being supposed to be Phaidon, who was present:—

'Kriton, when he heard this, made a sign to the servant; and the servant went in and remained for some time, and then returned with the jailor carrying the cup of poison. Sokrates said: "You, my good friend, who are experienced in these matters, shall give me directions how I am to proceed." The man answered: "You have only to walk about until your legs are heavy, and then to lie down and the poison will act." At the same time he handed the cup to Sokrates, who in the easiest and gentlest manner, without the least fear or change of colour or feature, looking at the man with all his eyes, as his manner was, took the cup and said: "What do you say about making a libation out of this cup to any god? May I, or not?" The man answered, "We only prepare, Sokrates, just so much as we deem enough." "I understand," he said: "yet I may and must pray to the gods to prosper my journey from this to the other world—may this, then, which is my prayer, be granted to me!" Then holding the cup to his lips, quite readily and cheerfully he drank off the poison. And hitherto most of us had been able to control our sorrow; but now, when we saw him drinking, and saw too that he had finished the draught, we could no longer forbear, and in spite of myself my own tears were flowing fast; so that I covered my face, and wept over myself, for certainly I was not weeping over him, but at the thought of my own calamity in having lost such a companion. Nor was I the first, for Kriton when he found himself unable to restrain his tears had got up and moved away, and I followed; and at that moment, Apollodorus, who had been weeping all the time, broke out into a loud cry, which made cowards of us all. Sokrates alone retained his

[1] Vol. i. p. 468.

calmness. "What is this strange outcry?" he said: "I sent away the women mainly in order that they might not offend in this way, for I have heard that a man should die in peace. Be quiet, then, and have patience." When we heard that, we were ashamed, and refrained our tears; and he walked about until, as he said, his legs began to fail, and then he lay on his back, according to the directions, and the man who gave him the poison now and then looked at his feet and legs; and after a while he pressed his foot hard, and asked him if he could feel; and he said no; and then his leg, and so upwards and upwards, and showed us that he was cold and stiff, and he felt them himself and said: "When the poison reaches the heart, that will be the end." He was beginning to grow cold about the groin, when he uncovered his face, for he had covered himself up, and said (they were his last words): "Kriton, I owe a cock to Asklepius.[1] Will you remember to pay the debt?" "The debt shall be paid," said Kriton. "Is there anything else?" There was no answer to this question; but in a minute or two a movement was heard, and the attendants uncovered him; his eyes were set, and Kriton closed his eyes and his mouth. Such was the end,' continues Phaidon, 'of our friend, whom I may truly call the wisest and justest and best of all the men whom I have ever known.'

I will not detract by any words of mine from the solemn beauty of this picture. The death of Sokrates has always and most deservedly occupied a high place in the lugubrious chronicles of similar events. A termination in completer harmony with the current of his life it would be impossible to conceive. There is almost a peculiar fitness in his execution as a Neologian and Free-thinker—like a brave soldier dying, not on his bed, but on the battle-field. We are almost inclined to forgive the philistinism, the intolerance, the religious dogmatism, the philosophical narrowness which could achieve such results. Nor is the melancholy satisfaction we feel at the mode of his death diminished when we bear in mind attendant circumstances. His life's work was clearly done; whatever efficacy was likely to attend his mission had been already attained; it was most improbable that it could have been increased by a few more years' labour in so ungrateful a field. His unpopularity was on the increase, and his memory was hated by his fellow-citizens after his death. Besides, he was now seventy years old, many more years he could not have expected to see, and,

[1] Probably to be taken in the sense that death is the supreme physician, the healer of all human evils. This interpretation is entirely in harmony with Sokratic irony, and with his custom of paying homage to the deities of his own choosing, though employing popular designations for them.

as Mr. Grote has remarked, it is a consolatory thought that he probably suffered less after his hemlock-draught than he would have done had he died of disease, or even by the general decline of old age.

Sokrates is the first eminent Skeptic who has appeared in European philosophy, the first who asserted the rights of the human reason to inquire in whatsoever manner or direction it thought fit —who proclaimed Nescience as the highest human wisdom. As I have already more than once remarked, he is more Skeptical than Pyrrhôn; not that his Skepticism is more pronounced, nor that he arranged its method and conclusions into a definite system, nor that he devised the formulas, definitions, &c., which mark succeeding Skeptics. Against dogmatic negation such as that of Pyrrhôn, Sokrates would have recalcitrated more vehemently than against dogmatic assertion. An unbelief which started instead of terminating with Nescience he would have deemed spurious; but he is Skeptical by virtue of his confessed ignorance and his unremitting search. His Nescience was mainly a personal conviction, a peculiar idiosyncrasy by which he was in theory distinguished from all other men. No doubt it was at the same time a starting-point in the downward path of negation. It only needed the transference of the thinker's standpoint from the individual to the race to make his personal suspense assume the form of universal negation. Such a transference was almost inevitable, and we shall on the next occasion have to discuss it as the next stage in the Skeptical evolution of Greek philosophy. Nor were the other personal peculiarities of Sokrates of less importance in the interests of free-thought—the individualism which marks the personal consciousness and the reason, the ultimate standards of truth; the indomitable courage and independence which pursued the path of research with little regard to popular obloquy and malignity; the final scene of his life, the imperturbable *sang-froid* with which he took his evening draught of hemlock as if it had been some harmless beverage—all these influences combined to attach to his personality a vigorous and predominating power.

Thus Sokrates, the central figure of Greek thought, represents the culminating point of its Skepticism. His position of personal doubt stands midway between the half-formed Skepticism of the Eleatics, the Atomists, Herakleitos, and the Sophists on the one hand, and the determined and universal negation of Pyrrhôn and Ainesidemos on the other. Accordingly his nam stands high as an authority among the Geeek Skeptics, from Pyrrhôn to Sextos.[1]

[1] Sext. Emp. *adv. Math.* xi. 2; comp. Cicero, *de Orat.* iii. 17, who says:

Not that I would maintain that the influence of Sokrates on succeeding thinkers was exclusively Skeptical. A gigantic intellect like his throwing itself with ardour into every object and mode of thought operates on after-speculation like a stone thrown into a pond. It induces movement not in one but in all directions. The waves of agitation which it raises are concentric, and all have the same central impulse. Hence all the subsequent mental activity of Greece may be traced directly or indirectly to its great freethinker. The transcendentalism of the Platonists; the Dialectic, the stress on induction, the versatility of Aristotle; the Hedonism of the Epikourœans; the absolute morality of the Stoics; no less than the negation of Pyrrhôn and Timon; the probabilism of the Academy; the suspense of Ainesidemos and Sextos Empeirikos, are all so many ramifications of Sokratic teaching or emanations of the Sokratic spirit. Still, I contend, the chief impulse was Skeptical. Partly the exaltation of Nescience, partly the stress on self-consciousness as the root of all knowledge, partly the individualism and self-assertion begotten of the last principle which Sokrates manifested both in life and death, gave an impulse to Greek free-thought which it never afterwards lost. The extent of this is seen by a brief observation of the various directions in which his disciples proceeded after his death. Plato, the most famous of the companions of Sokrates, carried out the Sokratic introspection into an elaborate scheme of idealism, which is, however, not without Skeptical elements and self-contradictions. Like his master, he proclaims the sacredness of search after wisdom, while its actual attainment is pronounced impossible for humanity, at least in this sphere of existence. The mode in which he works up the antinomical discussion of his Dialogues, though derived originally from the *viva voce* of Sokrates, clearly proves the stress he himself placed on controversial Dialectics, as well as the supreme indifference with which he contemplated their inconclusive results. If the spoken 'Dialogue of Search' represents Sokrates as a free-thinker and unscrupulous logician, it is difficult to see why the written dialogue, often with additions, should not prove Plato himself to possess similar tendencies. His method is Dialectical. He is more thoroughly convinced than Sokrates that 'Dialectic is the nature of things.' This renders all the more remarkable his admission of the self-destructive character of logical exercitation, and of the danger of imparting Dialectics to immature intellects. But besides allowing the Skeptical issue of unrestrained Dialectic, Plato does not hesitate to

'Fuerunt etiam alia genera philosophorum, qui se omnes fere Socraticos esse dicebant: Eretriacorum, Herilliorum, Megaricorum, Pyrrhoniorum.'

affirm that extreme metaphysical abstractions are in their nature self-destructive. Incidentally, this is shown in most of the later Platonic discourses, but it may almost be taken as the theme of that remarkable dialogue 'Parmenides.' Here we have Plato attacking with his remorseless logic his own doctrine of ideas, and triumphantly exposing their groundlessness. This phenomenon has appeared so strange to some critics that they have pronounced the 'Parmenides' spurious. But if we remember the school in which Plato had been trained, and the perfectly unscrupulous manner in which Sokrates allowed his Dialectic 'to play the two sides of the game,' the self-refutation of Plato will not seem so surprising. We shall find other cases of Skeptics, who in the mere exuberance of intellectual freedom allow their Dialectical weapons to attack and annihilate each other. Montaigne is a conspicuous example of this mental suicide. He takes as much pains in controverting his own opinions as he does in establishing them. As he wittily expresses it, he is quite ready with the old woman in the story to light one candle to St. Michael and another to the dragon. The 'Parmenides,' and in a lesser degree the 'Philebos' and 'Sophistes,' represent Plato in the same impartial mood.

We have also in Plato and in his relation to Sokrates what I take leave to call sentimental Skepticism. The search for truth that actuated Sokrates was mainly an intellectual craving, a natural propensity or rational instinct. In Plato, with his greater tenderness and profundity, the search after the undiscoverable assumes the form of an engrossing and vehement passion, which takes its form and attributes from sexual desire. Plato contemplates truth or wisdom as the object of a devouring love, a yearning for unattainable fruition. In this picturesque form the sentiment has found a place in beliefs of various kinds; we have it, *e.g.* in Neo-Platonism, in Oriental and Christian mysticism, and, in literature, in Dante's Beatrice and the etherealized Laura of Petrarca's later days.

With these Skeptical elements both in the form and substance of his writings, we cannot be surprised that the reputation of Plato in Greek philosophy is to a great extent Skeptical,[1] nor that the schools that affiliated themselves directly to his teaching, *i.e.* the older and newer academy, professed free inquiry and a distrust of dogmatic and definitive truth as the basis of their teaching.

Nor are the Sokratic schools, the Cynic, Megaric, Kyrenaic, and Pyrrhonian, free from the Skeptical leaven derived from their common source. They represent in the different directions of Ethics, Dialectics, sensualism, and Skepticism, developments of Sokratic

[1] Comp. Sext. Emp. *Pyrr. Hyp.* lib. i. chap. 33.

teaching, real or assumed. Antisthenes, the founder of the Cynics, based his doctrine on the moral teaching and practical austerity of Sokrates. He aimed at a complete independence of external objects by means of abstinence and voluntary privation, thus making the Sokratic Nescience, intellectual abstinence so to speak, a general principle of self-mortification. Virtue, absolutely and for itself, he regarded as the chief good, all other knowledge and speculation being worthless. Science he despised because the natures of things cannot be ascertained. All mere human opinions he considers equal both in want of authority and impossibility of refutation. Antisthenes came nearest his master in pursuing the dangerous office of public censor, and advising and reproving all whom he cared to address, without the least regard to rank, wealth, or social position. Indeed, his contempt for these gewgaws of humanity was stronger, or at least more forcibly expressed, than in the case of Sokrates himself.

2. Eukleides and the Megaric school seized on the Dialectic of Sokrates and the Eleatics, and developed its many-sided capabilities into a system of extreme Eristic. From this standpoint of virtual Skepticism, combined with an unreserved belief in the omnipotence of Dialectic, they made war on all dogmatic systems, and principally against the empiricism of Aristotle. They thus pursued against systems of knowledge the course Sokrates pursued against the knowing individual. The Megarics served by their stress upon mental processes of every description, by propounding and investigating various kinds of ambiguities and uncertain issues verbal and otherwise, to advance the science of logic, and they thus form the connecting link between the free Dialectic of Sokrates and the formal logic of Aristotle. In the Aristotelian treatise on Sophistical arguments we have a full account of the Eristic in which the Megarics with the Sophists were in the habit of indulging; while the later Skeptics, especially Sextos Empeirikos, seem to have drawn largely from the same arsenal of unrestricted and minute Ratiocination.[1] The school also furnished, as was only reasonable, some apt disciples to the negation of Pyrrhôn and his successors.

3. The Kyrenaics seem to have carried out the free-thought of Sokrates in a perverted direction by exaggerating his teaching as to the foundation which sensuous perception affords to ratiocination, and also by mistaking his observations upon the supreme good. They made the central doctrine of their system to be a sensual

[1] The best account of the Megarics, their Eristic, and their relation to subsequent Skeptics, is contained in Prantl. *Gesch. d. Logik*, i. pp. 33–57.

hedonism—a conclusion far removed from both the theory and practice of Sokrates.

The subsequent influence of the Sokratico-Platonic philosophy in the Neo-Platonism of Alexandria, in the Christian Fathers and the Schoolmen, is a large subject, upon which we cannot enter. Its evolution in the direction of negation will meet us when we come to investigate Pyrrhonism. As a rule we may say that it continued to manifest in varying proportions the combination of Free-thought with Idealism which we have in the Platonic Dialogues. I am far from thinking that in Christianity the bias of Platonism was exclusively Skeptical. Harmonizing in many points with the growing dogma of the Church, Plato's abstractions and speculations occasionally hardened into definitive and infallible truths, or else his ratiocination was employed to confirm tenets already promulgated authoritatively by the Church. But the Sokratic elenchus produced its usual effect wherever it found a congenial soil, whether in individuals or in epochs of thought. Justin Martyr, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Augustine may stand as types of men within the Church whose intellects were profoundly stirred by Sokratic reasoning, while one of the most distinguishing marks of the Renaissance, both in Italy and France, consisted of the growing recognition of the merits of Sokrates as a Free-teacher. In the literary revivalism in Italy his acquaintance was first made through the medium of Cicero's philosophical works, and next by the study of the original works of Plato and the founding of the Florentine school of Platonists. Men soon learnt from thence the real import of Sokratic teaching. They perceived in its unrestricted freedom a powerful weapon against dogmatic teaching of every kind. When, *e.g.* Ramus was struggling in the meshes of the dominant Aristotelianism of his time, the study of Plato impelled him to throw off the Scholastic yoke. 'What is to prevent me from Sokratizing?' was the question by which he established his individual right to doubt and inquiry. When Picus Mirandula entered the lists against the same dogmatism, he also drew his weapons from the inexhaustible armoury of the Sokratic Dialogues.[1] Similarly, when a German writer of the sixteenth century (Puy Herbault) fell foul of Rabelais' 'Pantagruel,' he described its author's daily occupations as 'Drinking, love-making, and Sokratizing."[2]

[1] Comp. J. F. Pic. Mir. *Examen Doct. Vanit. Gent.* lib. iv. *op. om.* ii. p. 1011, &c.

[2] See his work *Theotimus, sive de tollendis et expurgandis malis libris, &c.*, Parisiis, 1549, pp. 180, 181. The author's Latin name was Putherbeus. Rabelais avenged himself on his monkish adversary by classing his kith

The name of the greatest thinker of Hellas had become, in short, a synonym for Skepticism both moderate and extreme. On more modern thinkers the Sokratic elenchus has continued to exercise its ancient electrifying and awakening stimulus; though invested in the mystic robes and chameleon hues of Platonic idealism, it has made more doubters than idealist dogmatists. Indeed, I have no hesitation in saying, after Scaliger's well-known remark as to the Apocalypse finding or leaving its students mad, that a careful and thoughtful study of the Sokratic method either finds men Skeptics or leaves them so.

. . . . . .

ARUNDEL. I frankly own, Doctor, that your conception of Sokrates is one I cannot accept. In appearance, your attempt to make him not only a Sophist but a Skeptic is more *grotes*que than Grote, but in reality you agree with the historian, for you limit Skepticism to suspense or uncertainty, whereas Grote understood by it negation. You have also eliminated to a considerable extent that most picturesque element of the Sokratic method—I mean its irony; for if his Nescience was his own sincere conviction there is no room for irony, and on that point, I suspect, few students of the Platonic Dialogues would agree with you. I also think you might have presented his belief in God, Reason, and Virtue (and I should have added Immortality) more as subjects of his daily teaching, instead of relegating them into the abstruse region of esoteric conviction and unconditional imperatives. Why not suppose that he had attained them by the usual course of ratiocination, though his ironical *rôle* of ignoramus prevented his disclosing the fact?

TREVOR. In making Skepticism mean suspense, I am justified by the genesis of the thing itself as well as by the use of the word in Greek philosophy. The mark of the Skeptic proper was his ἐποχή, his withholding assent, not his denial of any given truth, which might be altogether arbitrary and dogmatic. Now I am aware of no distinction which can possibly differentiate the Nescience, οὐ γίγνώσκω, of Sokrates, from the ἐπέχω, 'οὐκ ὁρίζω,' and similar formulas of suspended belief of later Skeptics, or from the 'Je ne sçais

and kin among clerical fanatics, under the name of 'enraijez Putherbes (*Pantagruel*, lib. iv. chap. xxxii.). Comp. C. Cantù, *Gli eretici d'Italia*, vol. i. p. 259.

pas' of Montaigne. I regard it, therefore, as a serious blot upon Grote's perspicacity and his knowledge of thought-evolution that he did not discern the close connection between Sokrates and later Greek Skepticism, as Tennemann, Hegel, Brandis, and a few other writers have done. As to Sokrates having formally inculcated virtue, this is disproved both by his unpopularity and by his standpoint of Nescience. Positive teaching of every kind he disowned; for, as he pertinently asked, how could a man teach anything who knew nothing? His ethical method was indirect and incidental; or else it was presupposed as an ultimate truth transcending demonstration and discussion. That Sokrates had strong convictions I have already granted; all I maintain is, they must have been, both in themselves and admitted by him, unconditional affirmations of his intuition. So far from being reasoned conclusions of his intellect, he distinctly intimates that such conclusions were to him indemonstrable. We must be careful, I repeat, not to lay anything to the charge of Sokrates which conflicts with his position of Nescience. This is the root-thought of his life and teaching. The irony which I am far from denying I consider as merely the mask or colouring of his Nescience, it is not the feeling itself. If it were true, as some have asserted,[1] that his Nescience was merely assumed, it would make his life and teaching an organized hypocrisy as great as any of those which he condemns. We must also bear in mind his confidence in Dialectic. This, indeed, appears to me to have been somewhat extravagant. He refused or was unable to see what Plato afterwards found out, that Dialectic is a two-edged weapon to be employed only by persons of staid principles and mature years, that in its essence it is utterly lawless. . . . That suggests to me to ask if you, supposing yourself to have lived at Athens about 410 B.C. and having sons growing up, would have liked to put them one and all under the tuition of Sokrates?

ARUNDEL (after some hesitation). To tell the truth, I am not sure that I should, at least without some kind of discrimination. If they were thoroughly steady, well taught

[1] Comp. Cicero, *Lucullus*, chap. v.

in moral and social duties, and in reverence to the gods—in short, if in these respects they were like Sokrates himself, I should regard his teaching as invaluable. But I do not think the Sokratic elenchus eminently calculated to develop in raw unformed youths what we commonly understand as a firm character. Logical exercitation with 'unlimited liability' is likely to result in a character as oscillating and uncertain as that of a Montaigne. That Sokrates's method did not produce such mischievous results is a proof to my mind that his teaching extended itself far beyond the inconclusive results of the 'Dialogues of Search,' and embraced a great part of the didactic exposition we have in the other dialogues, as, *e.g.* the 'Phaidon.'

HARRINGTON. For my part, I quite agree with the position of your paper, that there is little or no difference between Sokratic Nescience and Pyrrhonic Suspense. The latter is an imperative development of the former; but I must protest, Doctor, against your remark as to the tendency of unlimited Dialectic, for, as you must see, it reduces human reason to an absurdity. You may have, of course, a captious, contentious Eristic that will dispute any truth or fact, no matter how obvious; but that in reality is not Dialectic, it is only a specious and unworthy imitation of it. It bears as much resemblance to reasoning as the simious imitation of human action by an inferior animal bears to the wise conduct of rational and civilized men. Besides, if all ratiocination end in absurdity, the reasoning that makes the discovery is also absurd.

MRS. HARRINGTON. Another objection that might be alleged to Dr. Trevor's view is, that it makes the life of Sokrates a failure. He trusted implicitly in Dialectic; but if the end of all Dialectic is intellectual Nihilism, the trust was misplaced in itself and misleading in respect of others. Could Sokrates, I wonder, have had a dream of the future, in which he foresaw that by his method men would ultimately attain truth as well as freedom?

TREVOR. That is not impossible, though such an outlook is not justified by the history of philosophy. But whatever fate he anticipated for his philosophy, we may be

assured he did not consider his life as a failure. Lightly as we may consider his conviction of Nescience, he unquestionably valued it very highly as an incentive both to intellectual inquiry and to ethical excellence. A 'mission' that could have brought home to men a firm persuasion of their ignorance he would have considered beneficial, just as Christians might regard the life-work of a Thomas à Kempis, Augustine, or Pascal. That his mission failed to effect its object for the time being is, I think, probable. . . . But, however that may be, all I am concerned to maintain is that in method and result Sokrates is a Skeptic.

ARUNDEL. But allowing him 'the comfortable doctrin' o' his ain naethin'ness,' to use a phrase I once heard from a Scotch Calvinist, Sokrates had no right to infer the Nescience or nothingness of others.

TREVOR. I do not think Sokrates did this on a large scale, though the analogy you have suggested shows how tempting the generalization '*ex uno disce omnes*' is, for was there ever an especially great sinner who did not include all mankind in the same category? I believe, as I said in my paper, that Sokrates never came to the conclusion that Nescience is the property of all men. I do not think he carried his conclusion beyond his actual induction. He had certainly tested a good many and found them as ignorant as himself, but I do not think he would have made a few of his fellow-citizens, or even all Athens and Attica, commensurate with the universe. The great desideratum of the Platonic Dialogues in their relation to Sokrates is that they reveal little of his inner life previous to commencing his 'mission.' His innate tendency to introspection warrants us in concluding that his own self-examination must have been very severe. He learnt, I think, something of the byways, crooked turnings, and pitfalls of human investigation 'at home.' This is also confirmed by his own statement, that he tried to analyse the *modus operandi* of his Daimon, but unsuccessfully. Most likely he tested his other convictions, *e.g.* his absolute verities, in the same way, probably with a similar failure. Perhaps that was the very reason why he was not anxious to find established foundations for the

truths he taught. He found that his faith in his Daimon was not affected by his inability to discover any rational ground for the belief, and he thought that the useful necessary convictions of others would remain intact, even though he showed that in final ratiocination they were baseless.

ARUNDEL. I suppose you are right as to Sokrates being a seeker, and not caring to find or at least to pronounce dogmatically on his 'findings;' I confess that is a state of feeling with which I have little sympathy. There are people who in intellectual research are always itching to 'gild refined gold and paint the lily,' who are never satisfied with the actualities of existence, but long after potentialities for which they have no other ground but a morbidly eager fancy. Perhaps with the people themselves one might feel some sympathy if it were not for the ill effect of their phantasies upon others more slenderly endowed with imagination. I am willing to concede that Skeptics may not do much harm to themselves by their incredulity, for their distrust of realities may be compensated by a larger store than common of ideality (just as Trevor's Sokrates made up for his denial of ordinary convictions by his absolute truths); but other men see their Skepticism who, having no ideals to fall back upon, intuitive or other, when they are deprived of actuality are left with a sense of vacuity hard to fill up. If my neighbour, *e.g.* finds me denying truths which to him are not only obvious but indispensable, both as a religious creed and as the mainspring of a well-regulated life, it is possible that my Skepticism, if he notices it, may affect the stability of his convictions, and may lead him to an excess of irreligion or immorality into which I from a higher ideal standpoint might be in no danger of falling.

TREVOR. Excuse me, Arundel, but you are surely adopting a curious and unsatisfactory reason for your belief. That our conduct should be guided to a great extent by the rules and restrictions of the society in which we live, I readily grant. But that our creeds, *i.e.* our personal beliefs on speculative matters, should be determined by the wishes, prejudices, and caprices of other men, is a proposition to

which I could never assent. Your notion, in fact, strikes at the root of Protestantism, which is a man's sole responsibility to God for his belief. No small amount of the terrorism which dogma has exercised on humanity is due to the supposed dire consequences of independent or individual belief; and in protesting against the *à priori* obligation of any man to be a member of any sect, community, or school, whether religious or secular, the greatest value of our free-thinkers consists.

HARRINGTON. No doubt Arundel has been defending a principle which has been overstrained by Romanism and other types of extreme dogma. Still there is something to be said for the reticence or suppression of convictions when their avowal would cause needless pain or offence to others. I remember hearing of a Socialist who, being at a funeral when the relatives of the deceased consoled themselves by the hope of seeing him again beyond the grave, took occasion to avow his own materialism, and attempted to demonstrate the impossibility of a future life. The man might have been sincere in his convictions, but in feeling and humanity he was a brute. People speak in laudatory phrase of a man 'having the courage of his opinions.' Of that courage we may say as of physical valour, that 'discretion' is not unfrequently 'its better part.' The great difficulty of perfect tolerance is to allow the respect that is always due to the sincere and conscientious convictions of others, when these do not seem injurious to the interests of virtue and civilization. Of course the point at which they become so must depend on circumstances.

MRS. HARRINGTON. I must say I share Mr. Arundel's puzzlement as to the indifference of Sokrates to realized truths. It appears to me to detract from his devotion to truth itself, and that is an imputation one would be loth to make on Sokrates. Dr. Trevor said he delighted in the road, but did not care where it ended. But with all his uncertainty he must have felt at least sure of the way he had actually traversed, the milestones or wayside objects he had passed as he went along. He must have felt certain of his past if he did not care to prognosticate his future.

TREVOR. All he felt certain of was his conclusion of

Nescience. He could not have evinced any great anxiety as to the truth he was in search of without postulating its nature and anticipating its attainment, and this would have vitiated the purity of its search in respect of sincerity and disinterestedness. As to his preference of search, I have no difficulty in sympathising with Sokrates. Let me tell you a story bearing on the point. When I was a child about seven years old, I was once sent by my mother, in care of my nurse, to a neighbour's house some few miles distant, where I had been often invited to play with the children. The day was a lovely spring day. The whitethorn, I remember, was in bloom, the willows in the hedges were besprinkled with catkins, and our road was bordered with buttercups, primroses, and other spring flowers. I had never been that way before, and was enchanted with the walk. Every step we took I saw some new object deserving or at least attracting my notice. Now I was chasing a butterfly, now I requested my nurse to get for me a more than usually fine spray of catkins. I must needs stop and watch some tadpoles in a stagnant pool by the side of the road. Every time a bird flew out of the hedge I was urgent on my nurse to find me the nest. My nurse endeavoured to hurry me on, but with little success. She tried to allure me with the picture of what awaited me at my journey's end—the nice children I should meet, the many games we were to have, and other seductive appeals to my imagination; but it was of no use: I enjoyed the road, and did not care for our destination. At last we arrived, very late, but I remember it was with a pang of childish disappointment on my part. It seems to me that searchers for truth may be as I then was, so entirely taken up with the pursuit, the delights of the wayside, as to be, like Sokrates, really indifferent to any specific termination of their walk.

ARUNDEL. But every road is a path some whither, and it is bounded by hedges, if not furnished with direction-posts and milestones, and all these facts imply a direct purpose and intention. The idea of science you have given us seems to partake of the character of aimless wandering, instead of a single-eyed devotion to our pursuit. The truth-searcher

who labours to any useful purpose must start with a hypothesis, if only as a guide to his experiments, and a hypothesis is nothing else than presumed or anticipated truth.

HARRINGTON. No doubt a scientist employs hypotheses largely, but he is, on valid reason shown, just as ready to discard as to adopt them. He does not walk along a road as much as select one out of many tracks on the mountain-side, or very often he has to carve out a road for himself in a new direction. I agree with Trevor as to the standpoint of Sokrates; and there seems to me another answer to Maria's objection: Men of eager spirits are not given to consider or calculate possible attainment. They have no regard for the past, but only for the future. Enamoured of Prometheus, they rightly despise Epimetheus. You have examples of men of that type in every class of life. You remember, *e.g.* St. Paul's words, 'I count not myself to have attained: but this one thing I do, forgetting the things behind, and looking forward to the things before, I press forward to the mark,' &c. Similarly, though n a different province, I have a friend who is a successful business man, but who always declines to say or realize to himself what he is worth. He says that the process of acquiring money, the skill, energy, prudence, requisite for getting it, is more to him than the most magnificent fortune. My friend is a kind of mercantile Sokrates. What the great Greek delighted in was discussion for its own sake, or at least a means of finding out just what it might chance to find out, and delighting in the pure exercise of his intellectual acuteness, his wit, sarcasm, and irony. Had Euthyphron or Lysis propounded a definition of impiety or courage as perfect as human ingenuity could frame, nay, had the gods offered him solutions of his queries and problems, he would have rejected their overtures with scorn if he thought they would render discussion and search needless.

MISS LEYCESTER. A truth that should absolutely exclude all discussion seems to me inconceivable, for, if satisfied of the fact, you can always demand a reason why. We must not forget that the Sokratic Nescience occupies the twofold position of being a result as well as a starting-point of his inquiry. And what I admire especially in him is his bold

announcement of complete ignorance as the final outcome of his truth-search. Speaking with due reverence, it was an 'obedience unto death'—fealty to truth pursued to intellectual inanition. Most inquirers start with a presumption of what the truth they are looking for must needs be, and a predetermination that their search will agree with their forecast. There is nothing of this *arrière pensée* in Sokrates. . . . I wonder when the time will come that all honest, reasonable inquiry, no matter what its individual conclusions, will receive the meed of honesty and *bona fides*, even if it cannot claim veracious or widely accepted results?

ARUNDEL. That time seems to me to be dawning, and for my part I have no objection to see the dawn developing into full daylight. *Bona fides* I regard as a primary condition of all honest search, and so far a justification of most rational convictions. What I am doubtful about is the effect of this perpetual worry of truth-search upon men's dispositions. There is enough disquiet in the world already without making intellectual inquiry pursue its eternal round reckless of definite attainment or finality of any sort.

TREVOR. On that score I think a contemplation of Sokrates's character ought to have the effect of dispelling your alarm. Its most remarkable feature is its immovable serenity, its simple joyousness of temperament. Most truth-seekers who profess to be satisfied with their search occasionally indulge in plaintive wails over the lot of humanity. They cannot help bemoaning what they nevertheless consider the inevitable outcome of their efforts. Although if the choice were offered them they would, like Lessing, choose 'Search' rather than 'Truth,' yet they cherish as a sentimental grievance their chosen privation. To use a common proverb, they would fain keep their cake as well as eat it. Now there is nothing of this half-hypocritical sentimentality about Sokrates. He accepts his lot not only with acquiescence but with positive pleasure. He never whines about the impossibility of finding absolute truth. He never finds fault with the constitution of the universe or humanity. He never takes a maudlin pleasure in compassionating himself on account of his privations, he apparently regards them as normal incidents

of his lot. It is enough for him that he fulfils the highest dictates of his nature by his search for truth and his practice of virtue. For the rest, fate, destiny, fame, honour, death, he is supremely indifferent. Here is his creed, and I do not know a better philosopher's creed:

'Renouncing the honours at which the world aims, I desire only to know the truth, and to live as well as I can, and, when the time comes, to die.'

HARRINGTON. I cordially agree with your estimate of Sokratic equanimity; it would be difficult to eulogize it too highly. He always seems to me an admirable exemplification of the Hellenic attribute of repose—the common quality of all the literature, art, and philosophy of Greece. He represents repose in activity just as the Skeptics professed to find Ataraxia in the perpetual equilibration of antagonisms and antinomies. . . . But there is one more feature of the Socratic search—search for search's sake—that I should like to notice. It seems preferable to a definite looking-for of some particular truth in the respect that it imparts to the mental activities a wider, freer, more generous scope. Inquiry instituted to establish a foregone conclusion labours under the defect of having a limited object, whereas an investigation completely untrammelled by any theory or predetermined issue will achieve, though perhaps incidentally and unexpectedly, general results of far greater value. Truth-search may, I think, be likened to the Spanish and English expeditions of the sixteenth century to discover the famed *El Dorado*: they never found the golden town, but they opened up the continent of America to commerce and civilization. Or it may be illustrated by the old fable of the farmer who bequeathed to his sons a pot of gold hidden somewhere in his orchard: their zealous digging did not turn up the specified legacy, but incidentally the cultivation of the orchard proved highly remunerative. Most of the discoveries of science have been 'flukes' of this kind.

MISS LEYCESTER. What an advantage it would be if every centre of modern thought and life had a Sokrates for a philosophical Father Confessor!

ARUNDEL. Nay, Miss Leycester, not as a Father Confessor,

to whom only those need have recourse who are so minded, but as a genuine Hellenic *Sokrates redivivus*, duly armed with authority to stop, question, examine, and convince whomsoever he pleased. Imagine him, *e.g.* taking his stand in some of the populous London thoroughfares of the present day, arresting some over-anxious and perhaps not scrupulously honest stockbroker, and convincing him by his own admission that money was not the only good in life, and that it was better to endure than do an injustice; or accosting some brainless worldling and extorting from him an admission that his butterfly existence was not worth living; or eliciting from the mere sensualist a confession of the unworthiness of his pursuits. Or, taking his stand on the steps of some literary club, suppose him to attack a zealous materialist as to his complete knowledge of what took place at the Creation, or his boasted preference of matter for mind. Into what pitfalls might he not entrap the dogmatic evolutionist, with his assumed infallibility as to the only conceivable progress of things for the last million years, or the scientist who is more positive as to the constitution of distant planets and fixed stars than he dare be of the formation of our own globe?

HARRINGTON. No doubt the Sokratic elenchus is applicable to much of our existing scientific bumptiousness, but it is equally applicable, my dear Arundel, to the topics which concern your own profession. Imagine, *e.g.* Sokrates standing somewhere near the Court of Arches—as in the 'Euthyphron' he is supposed to stand in the porch of the king-archon—when a prosecution for heterodoxy was going on, and button-holing some zealous opponent of heresy, just as he did Euthyphron on the subject of impiety, and extorting from the young bigot a reluctant confession—(1) that orthodoxy was by no means capable of any distinct definition which should completely differentiate it from its opposite; (2) that he was really ignorant what was either one or the other. His task, I imagine, would be just as easy as his triumphant victory over Euthyphron.

ARUNDEL. Oh, of course: I did not intend to exempt my own profession from Sokratic castigation. To tell the truth, I do not know one more deserving of it. A little

more rigorous sifting of the individual bases of each man's religious faith, as well as a calm survey of the essentials of Christian doctrine from alien and even hostile standpoints, would render our clergy greater adepts than most of them are in arguing with 'Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Heretics.'

TREVOR. The only mode in which a Sokrates could now conduct his 'mission' would be giving him the chair at discussions, clubs, and meetings of that kind. Even then I fear the result would be incongruous. Among our artificial conditions of life and thought, our respect for conventionalisms of all kinds, the freedom of the Sokratic elenchus would be as much out of place as its author would be in a fashionable dress coat and white starched cravat. Still there is one thing most men can do. They can 'Sokratize' a little on their stock of acquired beliefs, and eliminate the unworthy or self-contradictory among them.

ARUNDEL. I was greatly surprised, Doctor, at your audacity in making Plato, with his enormous budget of transcendental beliefs, a Skeptic. In my opinion, no man is so well adapted for accepting dogmas of whatever sort as the extreme idealist. Doubt implies divergence, but the metaphysician who can identify thought and being is, one would suppose, proof against disruption and contradictions of all kinds. I should like to know a system of belief that a Hegel, *e.g.* could not have justified from his idealistic standpoint.

HARRINGTON. No doubt idealism has a marvellous faculty of transmutation, but the complete identity it claims to effect between Objective and Subjective, Thought and Being, and similar antinomies, appears to me in ultimate analysis quite superficial. While Being is contemplated persistently as a modification of Thought, or as long as the outer world is surveyed exclusively in the mirror of consciousness, the unity may be preserved. But the least attention to external phenomena as such, breaks the spell, and the irreconcilable duality again makes its appearance. Thought in its transcendental alliance with objective Being is in the position of the man in the nursery story who married a favourite cat which the fairies had transformed for the purpose into a

beautiful woman—the first live mouse behind the wainscot suffices to dissolve the connexion.

TREVOR. My reasons for defining Plato a Skeptic were briefly these: 1. Every consistent scheme of Idealism must be founded (as Harrington has just hinted) on the forcible and persistent repression of all extraneous knowledge-methods and results. 2. He himself admits that Dialectic in ultimate ratiocination is nugatory. 3. The general character borne by his writings in the history of philosophy.

ARUNDEL. But surely the fundamental axiom of Sokratic teaching, Γνώθι σεαυτὸν, ought to have preserved Plato and all his disciples from immoderate and dogmatic Idealism.

HARRINGTON. No doubt, had they always been careful to confine it within Sokratic limits. As it was, the σεαυτὸν became by idealistic perversion a synonym of the Universe. The chief of the Florentine Platonists, Picus Mirandula, thus interprets the maxim, '*Qui se cognoscit, omnia in se cognoscit*':[1] 'Who knows himself, knows all things in himself.' So that what Sokrates regarded as the justification and method of Nescience became to subsequent Platonists a claim of Omniscience.

TREVOR. Not exactly; the *omnia in se* of Mirandula merely expressed the subjective limitation of the thinker, and was not an equivalent for objective Omniscience. Whatever be our opinion of Idealism, we must admit in ordinary fairness, as well as in harmony with the saw of Protagoras, that individual knowledge must of necessity be *individual all-knowledge*—it must imply a *totality* of cognition. . . . But it is getting late, and I therefore propose that we adjourn.

. . . . . .

[1] Pic. Mir. *De hominis Dignitate, Op. Om.* i. p. 320.

EVENING IV.

POST-SOKRATIC SKEPTICISM.

PYRRHÔN TO SEXTOS EMPEIRIKOS.

Τοῦτο μοι, ὦ Πύῤῥων, ἱμείρεται ἦτορ ἀκοῦσαι
Πῶς ποτ' ἀνὴρ ἔτ' ἄγεις ῥᾷστα μεθ' ἡσυχίας
Μοῦνος ἐν ἀνθρώποισι θεοῦ τρόπον ἡγεμονεύων.

Timon of Phlios.

'Ye Powers, why did you man create
With such *insatiable* desire?
If you'd endow him with no more *estate*,
You should have made him *less aspire*;
But now our appetites you *vex* and *cheat*
With *reall* hunger, and *Phantastic* meat.'

Norris's Miscellany, '*The Complaint.*'

'I had always a humble opinion of my own powers as an original thinker, except in abstract science . . . but thought myself much superior to most of my contemporaries in willingness and ability to learn from everybody; as I found hardly any one who made such a point of examining what was said in defence of all opinions, however new or however old, in the conviction that even if they were errors there might be a substratum of truth underneath them, and that in any case the discovery of what it was that made them plausible would be a benefit to truth.'

J. S. MILL, *Autobiography*, p. 242.

'Incertainties now crown themselves assured.'

SHAKESPEARE, *Sonnet* cvii.

EVENING IV.

PYRRHÔN TO SEXTOS EMPEIRIKOS.

MISS LEYCESTER. Our forthcoming discussion will bring us to the very citadel of Greek Skepticism. Pyrrhôn, Ainesidemos, and Sextos Empeirikos we must take as its extremest exponents.

TREVOR. Not altogether, Miss Leycester; if, at least, we are to keep to the primary meaning of Skepticism as complete mental equipoise or suspense: of that the most influential teacher in Greek philosophy is Sokrates.

ARUNDEL. But do you really maintain that Sokrates was more Skeptical than Pyrrhôn?

TREVOR. 'Distinguo!' as the Schoolman would say when pressed by a dilemma. The position of Sokrates, as we saw, was Nescience, Skeptical equipoise—a determination not to affirm or dogmatize on any matter in which a conflict of views was reasonable or possible. Now this suspense is the climax, or, I might say, the only form of pure Skepticism, and must be carefully discriminated from negative dogma as well as positive dogma. But Pyrrhôn, or rather his followers, do not seem to have always maintained that rigidly judicial attitude. They fell occasionally into that determined negation which I regard as the next stage in the development of Greek Skepticism subsequent to its first distinct expression by Sokrates.

HARRINGTON. Well, Doctor, I cannot see what other development we could have expected. The proposition, 'I doubt,' or '*Je ne sçay*,' once propounded though only personally as a *lex credendi*, cannot be accepted as definitive. It immediately raises the question of the reason why, the relation of the doubter with brother-thinkers, and you are incontinently launched into absolute negation.

TREVOR. That tendency I have already admitted in my remarks on Sokrates. The *facilis descensus* from personal doubt to absolute Skepticism or dogmatic negation is easily accounted for. Man possesses an uncontrollable instinct to conjugate every personal verb; thus 'nescio,' once confessed, drags in its train 'nescis,' 'nescit,' or 'nescitis,' 'nesciunt.' The peculiar excellency of Sokratic wisdom partly consisted in this, that he did not care to prove mankind at large partakers in his Nescience, though no doubt he thought the extension of such a conviction among men highly desirable.

ARUNDEL. The standpoint of personal Nescience that refuses to take cognizance of its implications appears to me unnatural and for most men impossible. Nor can I concede that Nescience is the middle term of which the extremes are positive affirmation and negation. Regarded as a starting-point, Nescience has much greater affinity for negation than for affirmation. Look, *e.g.* at the Greek Skeptics, from Pyrrhôn to Sextos (Sokrates, I admit, is more persistently neutral): what they attack are affirmative dogmas.

TREVOR. Many reasons might be given for that. First, there is the proverbial difficulty of demonstrating a negation. Secondly, affirmations are not only more distinct and tangible, but more obtrusive and polemical, than negations. Thirdly, They are infinitely more prevalent and more mischievous. Skepticism, as I have more than once said, is produced as a reaction from or antithetical to dogma; but conceive all dogmas in existence to be negative and expressed in negative terms, and Skepticism would not lose its functions, but would be considerably impeded in their exercise. A mediæval warrior, given the choice, would much rather grapple with an earth-born, material foe, than with a disembodied spirit or emissary of the evil one, though he would regard it as his duty to combat either. Besides, the warfare which Skeptics wage against dogmatic affirmation is for the most part defensive, though it bears so often the semblance of an exclusively offensive polemic as to be confounded with it. (This, I may parenthetically remark, is the reason of the common confusion of Skepticism with negation.) What the Skeptic says to the dogmatist is not 'There is no truth,' but 'I de-

cline to accept your definition or statement of it as incontrovertible.'

MRS. HARRINGTON. I must say I agree with Mr. Arundel, that doubt has more affinity with denial than assertion. Is it not commonly admitted that doubt is the first stage in complete negation?

TREVOR. So is it of well-founded affirmation. It is the first stage of all rational independent inquiry, irrespective of its object or result. Let me take an instance of justifiable doubt. . . . It is questioned, *e.g.* whether the planets Jupiter and Saturn are inhabited. In itself, the matter is clearly indemonstrable, but there is ample scope for presumptions, probabilities, &c., on either side. The enthusiastic believer in 'more worlds than one' thinks that all the presumptions of the case point in the direction of its affirmation, while more cautious thinkers believe that the astronomical conditions of those planets make human life, such as we know it, a thing impossible. Here clearly is a case for the 'Je ne sçay' of the pure Skeptic, whose standpoint thus avouched is not a whit nearer one thinker than the other. In the same way, the existence of God as a Personal Being, though I myself hold the probabilities of the case preponderate immeasurably in its favour, cannot be said to possess such imperative demonstration as to interdict all doubt. Now what seems to me both unfair and intolerant is to confound mere doubt or hesitancy on such a point with absolute denial, so that the man whose conviction of deity did not at all times possess the same degree of assurance or coherence should be liable to be branded as an Atheist. This is only another form of the intolerance of Romanism and the narrow bigotry of the Inquisition, which similarly classify hesitation or non-affirmation as positive disbelief. I know few misconceptions that have worked more mischief in the world than this same confusion of mere doubt with positive negation. . . . Moreover, with regard to such beliefs as the question of God's existence, men of undoubted piety and orthodoxy have confessed to occasional qualms of doubt on the subject. All beliefs which are in part emotional must needs depend largely on particular moods and conditions of feeling.

ARUNDEL. But such moods are only occasional and temporary, whereas the equipoise or neutrality of the Skeptic professes to be persistent.

HARRINGTON. We may solve our difficulty perhaps in this way. Theoretically, Skepticism is the neutrality of complete suspense between negation and affirmation. Practically, and regard being had to the conditions of ordinary human existence which depend so much on decision and action, there is an affinity greater or less between doubt and positive negation. I agree with Trevor, we ought to make a greater distinction than we commonly do between the theoretic states, and there can be no question that our confusing them must be ascribed to the despotism of Dogma.

TREVOR. I am willing to accept your amendment, which indeed is only another mode of putting my own 'substantive motion.' Our standpoint in the discussion is theoretic and philosophical. I may add, that without a distinct recognition of Skepticism as a mean between the opposing extremes of negation and affirmation, we shall not be able to understand the reasoning or appreciate the position of the chief Greek Skeptics.

ARUNDEL. But I thought your own contention was that the pure Nescience of Sokrates became transformed in Pyrrhôn and his successors to an impure and positive negation.

TREVOR. In great part so it did; still the equipoise of the Skeptic was not altogether forgotten as its primary and ideally perfect standpoint. All the Skeptics from Pyrrhôn to Sextos made the withholding assent (*Epochê*) a distinctive characteristic of true Skepticism.

HARRINGTON. The progress in Greek Free-thought from Sokratic Nescience to Pyrrhonic Negation appears to me unquestionable as a fact in its philosophical history. It is, moreover, marked in the popular creed by a corresponding growth in Skepticism and rejection of once-cherished dogmas. This is instructively illustrated by the distinct and growing signs of Skepticism in the Greek drama. Taking only its three greatest names, Aischylos, Sophokles, and Euripides, the extent of dissonance between the popular faith and the speculations of these dramatists seems to me very noteworthy.

In Aischylos we have represented what might be termed theological Skepticism—the conflict that had arisen between the rational instincts of the nation and the old mythology. 'Prometheus Bound' is especially the drama of ancient Skepticism. Its hero—the noble, generous, indomitable Titan—is remarkable as being an exponent of Free-thought and aspiration long before Greek history commences. In the interests of justice, of human culture and freedom, he boldly defies Zeus, scorns and ridicules the rule of Olympus, carries out his mission of human enfranchisement and enlightenment—not, however, without a melancholy foreboding of unsatisfactory results—and proclaims in tones that have reverberated through all succeeding ages the inherent supremacy of virtue, disinterestedness, and duty. I would not myself dare to term Aischylos an actual Skeptic, but the author of 'Prometheus' was undoubtedly cognizant of the world-problems from which Skepticism has in part taken its rise, and was also aware of the imperfect solution of them which is all that our human faculties can offer. In Sophokles, Free-thought finds another mode of presentation. He delineates the conflict between that supreme Fate from whose law not even Zeus himself could claim exemption, and the lot of ordinary mortals. He recognizes also the dissonance that emerges between human instincts and affections, and the necessary restraints of law and social order. But the sense of puzzlement and awe—the suppressed murmur at the hard conditions, divine and human, under which man must realize truth and happiness—which are the general manifestations of intellectual disquiet in Aischylos and Sophokles, pale into insignificance when contrasted with the open Skepticism of Euripides. It is difficult to name any article of Hellenic belief on which the popular dramatist does not pour the cold water of his scorn and ridicule, and his attitude in this respect is of peculiar significance to our present subject from the fact that he was a disciple of Sokrates. Thus he questions the existence of Zeus,[1] points out the diversity which according to popular conceptions exists among the divinities of Olympus, euhemerizes Zeus as ether and Demeter as earth, dwells on the incon-

[1] Comp. on this point Welcker, *Gr. Trag.* ii. p. 844.

sistency, deceitfulness, and other ungodlike attributes of the popular divinities, maintains that mortals surpass the gods in virtue, says that religion—the worship of the gods, as well as morality—is determined by law and ordinary custom, thinks that the gods may be worshipped for form's sake even when they confessedly are not divine. He is more cynical and indifferent in questions of moral obligation than the generality of even professed Skeptics. His celebrated line—

> The tongue has sworn, unsworn remains the mind

—passed into a proverb as a maxim of prevarication and duplicity; and on one occasion his open preference for gold as superior to piety and patriotism so irritated his audience that they wished to expel him from the theatre.[1] This mark of disapprobation seems, however, to have been exceptional. Throughout his dramatic career Euripides was undoubtedly popular. We must therefore allow that audiences who heard with composure, if not with approbation, such dramas as 'Hippolytos,' 'Herakles Furens,' could have been neither ignorant nor unappreciative of the main principles of Free-thought. . . . What seems to me very remarkable in estimating the amount of Skepticism current in Greece during the fourth century B.C. is, that there was such a distinction made between free speculation founded on ratiocination, and any overt act of profanation of rites or temples. The former was allowed to pass unquestioned, the latter was certain to entail the formidable charge of impiety (*ἀσέβεια*). This distinction might possibly have suggested the general consensus of all the Greek Skeptics to allow and even to worship the gods of the State as a mere matter of patriotic and social convenience.

TREVOR. With your last suggestion I am unable to agree. The observance by the Skeptic of the religious rites of any country in which he lived was based on his general plan of not allowing speculative or individual opinion to interfere with his duties as a citizen. His observance of a religion whose creed he doubted was founded on the same principle as his obedience to laws whose justice he disputed. His

[1] Comp. Welcker, *Op. cit.* ii. 790.

conception of religion (I am far from thinking it a high one) was that it was a powerful agency to secure the order and well-being of the community, and that its sanctions and restrictions were not to be lightly disregarded. He considered it as the homage which speculation is frequently compelled to render to actuality or utility.

ARUNDEL. That was the notion of Montaigne, Charron, Hobbes, and a few more of that ilk, and in my opinion a more unworthy conception of religion it would be impossible to devise. Once take truth out of religion, and you deprive it of all vitality. It is a mere ghastly corpse—a thing possessing the organs and lineaments, but none of the real attributes of life.

HARRINGTON. It is at any rate susceptible of another interpretation. The primary demand of all great churches is that the individual should give up his mental independence as a sacrifice to the opinions of the majority. For my part, I see little valid distinction between a man who conforms to a religion of the truth of which he is doubtful, and another, a Romanist pervert, for instance, who defers his religious convictions to a creed which cannot command his full intellectual sympathy. Such sacrifices are often made, and they are not only regarded as meritorious by Romanists, but as possessing merit in proportion to their greatness.

ARUNDEL. But the sacrifices you speak of are made by men whose intellect and feelings are entirely under the control of the will, and therefore may be sincere. The Skeptic makes the offering of a confessedly disingenuous and pretended faith.

MISS LEYCESTER. He may, however, allege a Scriptural precedent—the well-known 'bowing in the house of Rimmon.' Independently of that, I agree with Charles that between the Skeptic conformist, and the Romanist who sacrifices his private convictions, there is no vital distinction. Coercing the will to accept what the reason of itself would reject is just as disingenuous as any other enforced agreement with a creed imperfectly acknowledged by the intellect. The Skeptic, moreover, might plead that his conformity was ultimately determined not by truth, but by such motives as general

utility, peace, order, &c.; indeed, he would all the readier fall back on the inferior motives from his persuasion that truth was unattainable. But waiving this point, and returning to Greece, Charles's mention of Prometheus as a legendary instance of Free-thought going back far into prehistorical epochs, reminds me of a speculation I have long entertained on the subject of Greek mythology. I confess to a strong feeling of repugnance to the attempt to make all the legends of Greece turn upon physical phenomena. I really cannot see why they should not express metaphysical facts as well. Nothing is more evident in the history of the Hellenic race than the early and wonderful development of its introspective powers. Why might not some of the results of that introspection have been embodied in the current language of the time, *i.e.* as myths? Take, for example, the fact—coeval, I suspect, with the early maturity of human speculation—of the persistent efforts of all higher intelligences to attain or propagate truth. This idea might have animated such legends as the attempt of the Titans to scale heaven, just as it did the legend of Prometheus or Phaethon; or take, again, the experience which thinking men acquired so early in human history, of reiterated attempts to attain truth completely frustrated, yet just as often renewed—why might not such an experience have suggested the myths of Tityos, Tantalos, and Sisyphos? The latter case is especially appropriate, because the name is, I understand, a reduplicated form of the word *σόφος*. Let me add that I claim no credit for the idea as novel; indeed, it is as old as Sokrates. You remember the passage in the 'Euthydemos' where Sokrates calls the Hydra a she-Sophist, 'who had the wit to shoot up many new heads when one of them was cut off.' Elsewhere he thinks that the names Chronos and Rhæa could not have been accidental; the giver of them must have known something of the doctrine of Herakleitos. Supported by such high authority, I should contend for a series of Skeptical myths. Of all legends that describe frustrated effort, engagement in impossible enterprises, a perpetual alternation of success and defeat, I would say that they embody some such experiences as those we find in the careers of our Skeptics.

HARRINGTON. Your hypothesis is at least favoured by the fact that one form of the legends both of Tantalos and Sisyphos makes their retribution a punishment for having divulged the secrets of the gods. So far, those legends have the same *motif* as the Promethean. The last-named legend, together with that of Phaethon, has always exercised an irresistible fascination on Free-thinkers.[1]

ARUNDEL. The reason why I should hesitate to accept a metaphysical origin for many of the old Greek legends is because I think it an unusual employment of the Mythopœic faculty. Men, in the infancy of humanity, readily transform into Mythes, natural phenomena, or the events of history; but the complete grasp of mental processes and results, and their presentation as external acts or events which is involved in their mythification, represent a much later stage of development. Hence I incline to the old theory that legends like those of Prometheus were primarily derived from historical characters—wise men or rulers who in ancient times endeavoured to elevate and enlighten their barbarous subjects or benighted fellow-mortals, and who failed in the attempt.

MISS LEYCESTER. I could understand that the external events of any great human career might become the object of mythology. But in the class of legends I speak of much more seems implied than the attempt and failure that outwardly characterize such a career. There is indicated a passionate desire to attain and diffuse a property held to be divine. The enterprise is not only difficult but sacrilegious. If the result is represented as successful, the success is attended by after-disappointment. If the attempt is frustrated, it is again and again renewed. The enterprise is noble, spite of all results. The hunger is divine though it can never be appeased. I fail to see how those mental desires, struggles, disappointments, could ever have become represented in Mythes unless by those who had actually felt them.

TREVOR. You may add to that the historical argument: It is difficult to point out any stage of Greek thought undistinguished by profound introspection. We find it marked in the language before the birth of its earliest literature.

[1] Comp. chapters on Giordano Bruno and Pomponazzi in this work.

The legend of Prometheus was already popular when Hesiod wrote, while the introspective power of Greek thinkers about 500 years B.C. is shown by Pythagoras and the Eleatics. Besides, we have similar 'knowledge-myths' in Hindu mythology, as well as in early records of Hebrew and Chaldee tradition. In the latter case we seem to have a whole collection of legends of which the narrative in the third chapter of Genesis represents one type. These have all the same general character—a tree of knowledge 'desirable to make one wise' is forbidden to certain representatives of humanity. The prohibition is disregarded. The fruit of the tree is eaten, and divine knowledge is acquired; but in speedy succession follows the punishment of lasting disgrace and disappointment.

ARUNDEL. The result of our discussion seems to be that Pyrrhôn, who is generally regarded as a kind of philosophical outcast, was in reality a late-born Prometheus, who, having attempted to discover truth and finding only error, thereupon set up a system on the basis of the impossibility of all truth. I confess I read the noble allegory somewhat differently. Prometheus not only believes in the divine fire, but actually transfers it to earth and places it in human possession. The result of his divine beneficence is described as by no means vain, but only inadequate. It is not that the fire is not omnipotent, but its human employers are impotent. . . . Returning to Greek Free-thought in the century after Sokrates's death, I thought Harrington evinced a disposition to over-estimate its extent, judging from the popularity of Euripides. To that I would oppose a few important facts. First, it seems evident that Sokrates, with his ill reputation as a Free-thinker and despiser of the gods, was unpopular among the Athenian demos long after his death. Secondly, the frequency of prosecutions for impiety between 500 and 400 B.C. Thirdly, the fact that during that period we have the birth and rapid development of the greatest dogmatic system in the whole of Greek philosophy, viz. that of Aristotle. I am inclined to regard the Peripateticism which was the dominant philosophy of Greece at the end of the fourth century as a dogmatic reaction and protest against the Skeptical laxity, the unlimited Eristic, and intellectual con-

fusion that ensued on the teaching of the Sophists and their successors.

TREVOR. The second of your reasons might have been omitted. The frequency of *Asebeia* prosecutions is an argument which makes as much for the popularity as for the unpopularity of Free-thought. Besides, the accusation was often made to get rid of a political opponent. It was the readiest mode of appeal to the passions of the Athenian mob. As to Peripateticism, I think you are right so far that Aristotle regarded his system as reactionary and constructive, contrasted with the preceding period of disintegration. It was certainly so regarded by his disciples. As Mr. Maurice remarks: 'Aristotle to a great extent proclaimed the search for wisdom to be at an end. He left the impression on the minds of his disciples that the whole scheme of the universe could be brought under the forms of the understanding.' But I agree with a recent writer who thus comments on these words: 'Could any announcement be more provocative of the latent Skepticism to which the Greek mind had always by its peculiar constitution been rendered more or less prone?'[1] What Aristotle and other dogmatists really did was to provide the Free-thinking schools with materials for their Skepticism, just as the Schoolmen and mediæval theologians prepared the way for the Free-thought of the Renaissance. Every distinct dogma or asseveration of truth was converted into a target for the keen arrows of the doubter. Hence, if Peripateticism implies a reaction towards prior methods and systems of thought, it also represents a fresh starting-point for the ruthless scrutiny and analysis of all subsequent Skeptics. No inconsiderable portion of the polemic of Sextos Empeirikos is directed against Aristotle and other dogmatic systems more or less connected with his own. During the Renaissance it was said, 'Had Aristotle never written, the dogmas of the Church had been fewer.' We might say that under like circumstances much of the controversial writing of the later Greek Skeptics had been needless.

HARRINGTON. There is, however, another side to your observation. The points of sympathy between Aristotle and

[1] Mr. Levin's *Lectures on the Philosophical Writings of Cicero*, p. 116.

Sokratic Free-thought are neither few nor unimportant. If the bent of Aristotle's intellect was towards dogma and definitive conclusions on all subjects of human knowledge, he was far from being dogmatic in the sense which the Athenian populace considered orthodox. His antipathy to the national worship was both greater and more unreservedly expressed than that of Sokrates. In point of fact, Aristotle was a Theist. His conception of deity was the 'mind' (*νοῦς*) of Anaxagoras, only more comprehensively reasoned and boldly asserted. He probably escaped the fate of Sokrates by a hasty flight from Athens; not wishing, as he said, to give the Athenians an opportunity of sinning twice against philosophy.

ARUNDEL. From the standpoint of belief in the Olympian deities as they were popularly conceived, you may be right; but, taking Aristotle's thought as a whole, its effect was to impart consistency and solidarity to Greek speculation. Its realism was a protest against the idealism of Plato. Its stress upon experience and observation was opposed to the incertitude and vacillations of mere theorizers. Its demand of and reliance on law, both of mind and of matter, of man and of nature, gave an impulse of fixity to Greek speculation; the effect of which is seen in the fact that all the more influential systems of Greek dogma, *e.g.* Stoicism, Epikoureanism, &c., take their rise after Aristotle, and are largely leavened with his principles. Hence I think its influence on the whole was dogmatic, and antipathetic to Skepticism. That his dogma may have furnished materials for Skeptics may be granted, without conceding that this constituted an impulse to Free-thought. Skeptics being always in a minority, and the overwhelming majority of mankind invincibly attached to fixed beliefs, they are never at a loss for materials on which to test their disintegrating processes. I readily grant that Peripateticism ultimately yielded to solvent processes operating from within, but these were rather Eclectic than Skeptic. Its disciples began to select each for himself the doctrines most congenial to his own intellect or feeling, and discarded the rest.

TREVOR. As a general rule you may say that the disin-

tegration that inevitably follows dogma takes first of all not the Skeptic but the Eclectic form; indeed, I cannot see how you can well discriminate between Eclecticism and Skepticism in such a case. At most the distinction can only be one of degree. A man who discards so many of the articles of a creed or the doctrines of a teacher the whole of which he is supposed to hold, is in all those rejected points a Skeptic. There is no creed in existence that has not a number of these Eclectic dissentients.

HARRINGTON. Probably not, but we must beware of confounding Eclecticism with Skepticism. However similar in incidental aspects, they are really opposed in principle: one implies selection, the other rejection. The instincts of the former are constructive, of the latter destructive. . . . With regard to the dominant influence in the later stages of Greek thought, I should not be very careful to discriminate between Peripateticism and the free systems that followed the lead of Sokrates. A remarkable similarity appears to me to run through all those stages. They agree in the possession of a common goal and a common method. What was to Aristotle happiness, or rather the supreme good, became to later thinkers—Stoics and Epikoureans as well as Skeptics—Ataraxia, or philosophic calm. They all shared also the opinion that this was to be attained by unceasing activity, research, or self-discipline of some kind, for even Epikoureans had to guard against agencies or elements which might disturb their philosophical serenity. This inculcation of search—unceasing, untiring activity—seems to me the very salt of Skepticism, as well as its complete differentiation, both from negation and affirmation. Without it intellectual equipoise would degenerate into apathy and indifference.

ARUNDEL. Combined with equipoise, I regard search as a salt 'that has lost its savour.' Assume that the result of all intellectual effort is an eternal equilibration of antitheticals and divergences, and to what purpose is search? Even if successful, it can only, *ex hypothesi*, result in another condition of equipoise and suspense. I fail to see the advantage of attaining by one's own voluntary efforts a never-ceasing succession of equally balanced uncertainties. If suspense is,

as Skeptics say, the ultimate goal of all human effort, then let us acquiesce in 'the ills we have, than fly to others that we know not of.'

TREVOR. On the other hand, Arundel, it is dogma, affirmative or negative, that renders all search an absurdity. A man who says of any debatable matter, 'This is indubitably true,' or, on the contrary, 'It is unquestionably false,' closes all further discussion. We must bear in mind that the standpoint of the Greek Skeptic had regard not to search considered as a means, but regarded theoretically as an end. To his restless intellectual mobility the conception of definitive conclusions of any kind was utterly repellent. We shall frequently, among our Skeptics, come across thinkers with precisely the same idiosyncrasy. Montaigne, as you know, is an illustrious example of it. Conceive the mental condition of a man like the French Seigneur, who avowed that if restrictions existed for him, although in a distant part of the world, he should consider his freedom limited and his happiness curtailed by them, and you will have a fair idea of the normal state of the Greek Skeptic. As regards the effect on subsequent philosophy which Arundel claims for Peripateticism, it seems to me immeasurably inferior to the influence of Sokrates. Aristotle himself derived unmistakable suggestions from Sokrates, and the Sokratic schools were the birthplaces of all the remaining dogmatic systems of Greece; *e.g.* Stoicism was the outcome of the Cynic, and Epikoureanism of the Kyrenaic, just as Skepticism was the especial offspring of the Megaric.[1] On the whole, I regard Sokrates as the actual source of the following tenets and tendencies, some of which are discernible in every stage of the later course of Greek philosophy:—

1. Self-knowledge and its result, Nescience.
2. Knowledge consists in consciousness, individual perception.
3. Non-affirmation or suspense asserted either (1) as a condition of philosophic caution and freedom, or (2) as a state of religious self-renunciation, or (3) as a propædeutik to possible knowledge.

[1] Comp. Zeller, *Gesch.* iii. i. p. 13.

4. Importance of search in and for itself.
5. Belief in the final superiority of truth, coupled with a distrust of positive dogma, at least an absolute determination to avoid the denial of ultimate truth.
6. Eristic and free discussion regarded as the only methods of truth.
7. A tendency to idealism as a necessary outcome of the assignment of all knowledge to the knower, and hence of his self-assertion.
8. Equanimity (*μετριοπαθεία*) as applied to bodily or to mental sensations. There is, *e.g.* an intimate relation between Sokratic Nescience, Pyrrhonic Epoché, the Stoic denial of pain and pleasure, and the Epikourean suppression of all impediments to Ataraxia. In each case there is a repression of individuality or of its constituent elements as a method of securing independence, freedom, and imperturbable calm.

MISS LEYCESTER. I have always thought it a little strange that with the subtle refining faculties of Hellenic thinkers and their love of introspection for its own sake, no school of pure negation ever emerged in Greek philosophy, the nearest approach to it being the mysticism of Pythagoras, and that of Plotinos and the Alexandrian School, which were, however, more Oriental than Hellenic.

TREVOR. That, I think, is easily accounted for. With all their keen subtilizing intellects, Greek thinkers had a vivid sense of reality. To project themselves like Hindu mystics into an abyss of Nothingness—to merge and lose their existence in an inane, infinite void—was an intellectual and personal suicide for which they had not the least inclination. The pure passivity such a condition entailed was a psychological state from which their vigorous vitality and mental energy recoiled. Now Skeptical suspense supplied them with just as much approximate negation as they cared for. It did not involve self-extinction. Far from destroying, it merely rendered doubtful and *ipso facto* energizing, vital and reasoning perceptions. Indeed it allowed a fuller scope for his mental restlessness than either negation or affirmation could of themselves supply. Hence we have the important fact that

Skepticism afforded to the Hellenic thinker the satisfaction of those instincts which among other philosophers is provided by Idealism. For that matter, all the Greek Skeptics, when duly analyzed, are more or less idealists. What they question is chiefly externality, the absolute trustworthiness of phenomena, of elaborate ratiocination, of common opinion. They do not dispute the reality *as mere appearances* of sense-impressions or mental perceptions; nor the binding nature of social and legal obligations; nor again do they deny consciousness as the final test of truth. Indeed, had Descartes or Bishop Berkeley lived in ancient Greece, they would have been classified with Pyrrhôn and Ainesidemos. . . . But I will not trench further upon matters which my paper discusses, so I will now begin to read.

. . . . . .

There can be no doubt that Free-thought in Greece suffered a reverse by the death of Sokrates, though its effect in this as in other similar cases was probably only temporary. By the instrumentality of Meletos and his impeachment, the popular orthodoxy of the Athenians had been vindicated, the divinities of Olympus had been preserved in their original status and dignity. The mischief of unrestrained Eristic had been authoritatively affirmed. The subversive tendencies of free speculation in religion and morality had been duly punished. In the eyes of the Athenian mob, it mattered little that this expiation for irreligion and immorality had been consummated in the person of the most religious and purest Greek that ever lived. The denial given by Sokrates's high character to the supposed ill results of his thought was entirely disregarded. His persecutors and judges acted on the principles which have always animated bigoted dogmatists. They were no more inclined to accept an unblemished life as an answer to a charge of immorality, than the Inquisition was to accept a religious life as a reply to the indictment of 'heretical pravity.' The immediate consequence of Sokrates's death was therefore the dispersion of his followers. Plato and Eukleides fled to Megara, other disciples took refuge elsewhere. But like the early Christians, who were 'scattered abroad' by persecution, these pupils of the great Athenian thinker employed their dispersion for the dissemination of their master's ideas. Later on, indeed, this diffusion of thought and philosophy, once concentrated in Athens, became a general movement through

the decreasing importance of that city as the metropolis of Hellenic culture which set in after the battle of Chaironeia. But during the earlier half of the fourth century places as wide apart as Megara, Cyrene, Elis, Eretria, &c., became centres more or less important of some phase of Sokratic teaching. Chiefest of these schools, both as regards the men who co-operated in its foundation and as preserving the most characteristic methods of Sokrates, was that of Megara. From this school proceeded the thinker who in the fourth century before the Christian era most resembled Sokrates, viz.:

Pyrrhôn.[1]

Pyrrhôn was born at Elis about 365 B.C., and therefore half a century after the death of Sokrates. In early life he devoted himself to painting, and some writers have thought that reflection on the subject of his art might have first suggested the speculations that afterwards induced him to become a Skeptic. He at any rate soon abandoned the brush and betook himself to the study of philosophy. Going to Megara, he placed himself under the teaching of Bryson, a disciple of Stilpon, who was himself a Skeptic and a renowned teacher among the Megaric philosophers. He is also said to have been a pupil of Anaxarchos, a disciple of another Skeptic, Metrodoros of Chios, who followed the traditions of Demokritos. In company with Anaxarchos, he is reported to have joined the expedition of Alexander the Great to India. This tradition is the more interesting because the similarity of his Skeptical creed with some of the methods and tenets of Hindu thinkers was recognized at a very early date. I shall have to touch upon this connexion a little further on. After his return from this expedition Pyrrhôn appears to have settled down in his native town, and to have pursued the calling of a teacher of philosophy. He gathered round him a circle of disciples, some of whom afterwards became famous. It is probable that Pyrrhôn, like most of the earlier Greek philosophers, gave lessons not only on philosophy, but on poetry and general literature as well. He was himself a man of

[1] Besides the usual Histories of Philosophy, of which the best are Brandis and Zeller, compare, on the subject of Pyrrhôn, Zimmermann's two monographs: 1. *Darstellung der Pyrrhonischen Philosophie*; 2. *Abhandlung über den Ursprung, das Wesen, und die historische Bedeutung der Pyrrhonischen Philosophie*, Erlangen, 1841–43. See also, on the chronology of the later Skeptics, *De Philosophorum Scepticorum Successionibus*, P. Leander Haas, 1875. By far the best and fairest English work on the Greek Skeptics is Mr. Levin's *Six Lectures introductory to the Philosophical Writings of Cicero*, Cambridge, 1871.

large and broad culture, and conversant, as most of the Skeptics were, with all the knowledge of his time. It is interesting to learn that Homer was his favourite poet, and that he claimed to find some suggestions of Skepticism in his lines. He also studied the writings of Demokritos, whose doctrines agreed on so many points with the Sokratic teaching he had acquired at Megara. Whatever other success attended Pyrrhôn's teaching, it does not seem to have brought him wealth. His circumstances are described as being marked by extreme poverty, which, however, he bore with the unruffled serenity of mind becoming a philosopher. He was held in so great repute by his fellow-citizens that they made him their high-priest and erected statues in his honour. On the other hand, fables and ludicrous stories were circulated concerning the extremity to which he carried his principle of Skeptical indifference.[1] He was said, *e.g.*, to be generally attended by a body-guard of disciples whose exertions were directed to protecting their master from falling over precipices, being bitten by mad dogs, run over by passing vehicles, or from other dangers to which his sublime indifference to the contingencies of life exposed him. But as more than one of his biographers have remarked, the half-insane man thus depicted could never have been chosen by the Elians as

[1] It is a natural error of the vulgar to formulate all speculative ratiocinations and conclusions in some practical or sensuous form. Closely related as their own minds are to actual phenomena, and impatient of all abstractions, they cannot conceive an intellect finding pleasure in pure speculation for its own sake—watching with interest the birth, growth, and juxtaposition of its immaterial creations, or formulating hypotheses not easily reconciled with the conditions of actual material existence. 'The carnal mind is enmity,' not only 'against God,' but against ideal philosophy. Hence, whenever abstract thought seems to assume or involve concrete absurdity, such men hasten to overwhelm it in the ruins, as they think, of a *reductio ad absurdum*. Thus Pyrrhôn's contemporaries, perceiving the futility in practice of complete indifference, were eager to point out the ridiculous consequences involved in such a position. A satirist of the time might have written—

'And coxcombs vanquish Pyrrhôn with a grin.'

Nor is it coxcombs only who indulge in this easy refutation of abstract philosophy. Dr. Johnson's reply to Berkeley's denial of matter, by striking his stick on the ground, was probably regarded by himself as conclusive. Even Goethe was ready with his dislike of transcendentalism to enjoy an argument of this kind; for when Fichte's house was attacked by riotous students, and his windows were broken, he remarked: 'Fichte might now convince himself in the most disagreeable way that it was possible for a *Not-Me* to exist externally to the *Me*.'

high-priest, nor made the object of so much honour and veneration as we know Pyrrhôn to have been; we are indeed assured by Ainesidemos that though he was skeptically undecided and indifferent in speculation, he was prompt and resolute in action—a combination which our researches will prove is by no means the impossibility that it is often thought. Pyrrhôn lived to be ninety years of age, so that if the effect of a philosophy in producing longevity is a proof of its salutary influence, Skepticism may claim a high rank. Nor is Pyrrhôn by any means an isolated example of a nonagenarian Skeptic. Indeed, I may incidentally remark that the length of days generally attained by the followers of those Greek sects who professed to cultivate Ataraxia—philosophic calm—is a convincing proof that the culture was not in vain.

Pyrrhôn's teaching seems to have been carried on like that of Sokrates, entirely by conversation and oral instruction. He left no written works behind him; indeed, the only mention of a writing of his is an ode he is reported to have addressed to Alexander. We are therefore entirely dependent for our knowledge of his doctrine on the works of his disciples. Chiefest among these is Timon of Phlios, a poet and dramatist who himself earned a reputation as a Skeptical teacher second only to that of Pyrrhôn. He is styled by Sextos Empeirikos, 'the Interpreter (ὁ προφήτης) of Pyrrhôn,' a relation which has been compared not very happily to that of Aaron to Moses. Accepting, then, the evidence of Timon as to the teaching of his master, we are told that the road of happiness—the supreme end of man—consists in the observance of the three following precepts:

1. We must consider what things are in their own nature or inherently.

2. We must consider what they are relatively to us.

3. We must observe the consequences or lessons of this relation.

As to the first, Timon, after Pyrrhôn, determines that all things in their real nature are indifferent, indeterminable, indistinguishable, so that neither by our sensations nor by human opinion can we discriminate truth or error. The wise man, therefore, will not trust them, but undogmatically, impartially, and fearlessly will stand apart, and will admit of all things that they no more exist than they do not exist. With this definition of Skeptic wisdom agree other witnesses of the Pyrrhonic philosophy. Thus we learn from a certain Askanios of Abdera that Pyrrhôn maintained there was nothing (inherently) beautiful or ugly, right or wrong, and hence nothing that could be defined as absolute truth. Men were ruled in their conduct by laws and customs, and Ainesidemos assures us

that Pyrrhôn determined nothing dogmatically on account of the equal balance of contradictories that existed in all subjects. In practical life he claimed to be guided by appearances. Another Skeptical position with which he was credited was that nothing was to be accepted as hypothetically true, and hence that the deliverances of the senses or the reason could not be assumed as indubitably certain. The utmost that might safely be affirmed was simply the actual appearance or presentation as such of any thought or idea to the individual himself. This position Pyrrhôn and his school exemplified by quoting the old proposition of Herakleitos and Demokritos: 'That honey is sweet I do not assert, that it seems to me to be so I admit.' The practical outcome of these Skeptical doctrines was naturally Epoché—abstention from all affirmation, or as it was called, with a retrospect to Pythagoras, Aphasia—Skeptical speechlessness. Assertion was to be limited to imperative deliverances of the senses or inward consciousness, and even thus was only to be regarded as a predication of appearance or seeming. As to the final result, Ataraxia would follow the suspense as certainly as its shadow clave to the substance, Ataraxia being in speculative questions that state of imperturbable serenity which in the inevitable ills of existence was denoted by a correlative term, equanimity (μετριοπαθεία).

One unfortunate result of Pyrrhôn's having left behind him no written work is our ignorance of the full scope of his Skeptical teachings. So great was his influence on all subsequent Skeptics that theories and arguments were often attributed to him, sometimes even called after his name, in the initiation or development of which he had no concern. Thus it is a disputed point whether we may ascribe to him or to some disciple of his the first enunciation of the celebrated Ten 'Tropoi,' or modes of withholding assent, which might be described as the Decalogue of the Greek Skeptics. They are evidently some of the most ancient of the systematic formulæ contained in their writings, and in that particular bear a close resemblance to the Decalogue of uncertain date found in the Books of Moses. They appear to belong to the age of Pyrrhôn, are frequently called by his name, but they cannot be so immediately traced to his authorship or authority as to be actually attributable to him. Probably he put them forth in some elementary form, or he may have collected and arranged the instances and illustrations on which their classification is based, and they were afterwards elaborated by a later Skeptic. The majority of critics, with whom I agree, assign them to Ainesidemos. I have accordingly reserved their consideration until we come to speak of that thinker.

Confining ourselves to the more authoritative indications of his

teaching, we perceive that Pyrrhonic Skepticism inculcates a position of reticence or suspense, passing into negation, on all subjects of speculation. But we must by no means extend Pyrrhôn's doubt or denial to the dictates of morality or to the ordinary relations of a citizen to the State in which he lived. Pyrrhôn clearly evinced the faculty of Sokrates for discriminating between what was speculatively uncertain and what was practically expedient or imperative. Among the latter he placed the ordinary ethical duties that men owe to each other. Cicero gives it as a maxim of Pyrrhôn's that, 'excepting virtue, nothing was worth having;' in other words, morality was not only the highest but the only good. He is also said to have explained his frequent fits of reverie by saying that he studied how to become virtuous. Indeed his special position as high-priest, as well as the customary deference of all Skeptics to the laws and observances required by the State, demanded a strict insistence on moral obligations. This was further enforced by the pure, unselfish example of his own life. The veneration in which he was held by his fellow-townsmen, not only during his life but long after his death, is only reconcilable with his exemplification of the highest personal social and civic virtues. By his disciples he was almost worshipped. Timon celebrates in glowing verses his freedom from blind reverence for opinion, from the inane puerilities of Sophists, from the seductions of a deceptive rhetoric, from the trivial pursuits of those who cultivate physical science. He wants to learn Pyrrhôn's secret of living in a passionless serenity far above ordinary mortals, and worthy only of the gods. Nor was this high estimate confined to disciples and personal friends. He is said to have won over to his disposition—the equable tenor of his life—men who refused to accept his philosophy, such as, *e.g.* Epikouros and Nausiphanes. The sublime development of Ataraxia that procured for Pyrrhôn this renown was alleged by contemporaries to be the product of his intercourse with Hindu mystics, but a more obvious mode of accounting for it is to attribute it to his assiduous imitation of Sokrates.

With the materials now before us we are in a position to award Pyrrhôn his due place among the Free-thinkers of Greece. Ordinarily he is classified as the first of Greek Skeptics. This can only mean that he first systematized the principles of Free-thought that were current in Hellenic speculation from its earliest commencement. The first Greek Skeptic is Sokrates, in virtue of his enunciation of Nescience as the static and normal condition of the philosophic thinker; and we have already seen that principles and methods more or less implying Skepticism were current long prior even to Sokrates. What Pyrrhôn, therefore, accomplished for Free-

thought was to carry to their legitimate conclusion and consolidate the traditions and methods of free-inquirers from the earliest infancy of Greek speculation. Setting aside the systematic arrangement and terminology, there is nothing in Pyrrhonism that we have not already met with in tracing the course of Hellenic Skepticism. If Pyrrhôn denied the validity of the senses as an attestation of absolute truth, the denial was as old as Greek thought. If he mistrusted the processes of the reason, this was no more than the Eleatics had done. If he made a distinction between individual and relative truth on the one hand, and general or absolute truth on the other, this had long been established by Protagoras. If he maintained Epoché to be the highest mark of philosophic wisdom, this was only the substitution of a general method or procedure for the personal conviction of ignorance which Sokrates asserted. If he laid stress on Ataraxia as the wise man's goal, both the thing and the term had been already affirmed by prior philosophers, notably by Demokritos. No doubt he and his school went beyond all former doubters so far as they suffered neutrality or equipoise to be transmuted into Negation, and the personal experience of the individual to become an indisputable law of the universe; but it seems likely that this step in advance of true Skepticism was taken unconsciously, it was undoubtedly combined with an appreciation of suspense or reticence as the normal standpoint of the Skeptic.

Besides its development in the direction of Negation, Pyrrhôn represents another advance in Greek Skepticism. He not only organized its procedures, but he named and classified them. To his school we must ascribe the numerous terms and formulas by which suspense or dissidence continued to be denoted among Greek Free-thinkers during the next five centuries. Sokrates, as we have seen, did not care to define. Probably no teacher ever existed less solicitous to formulate fixed rules and methods, whether for thought or conduct. The only philosophical prescription that can be fairly associated with his name is the celebrated 'Know thyself,' and perhaps a simple assertion of Nescience. But with Pyrrhôn we reach the technical stage of Skeptical evolution. In his school, if not by himself, was sown the seed of that wonderful harvest of technical terms, axioms, formulas, and definitions that we find in the writings of subsequent Skeptics. Considering its scope, no school of Greek thinkers possesses such an armoury of weapons, offensive and defensive. Every phase and degree of Skepticism, incipient doubt, Nescience, suspense, indifference, apathy, Ataraxia, is the subject of a lavish nomenclature and of a varied and reiterated definition. There seems, we must admit, no inconsiderable

incongruity between a system claiming to be founded on Nescience and such a number of exact formulas, rules, and technical terms. An adverse critic might not unfairly insist that such a phenomenon indicated a consciousness on the part of Skeptics themselves that their principles and processes were those of a minority, and that their due maintenance was attended with some difficulty. At any rate Pyrrhôn and his school must be credited with the formal shaping, consolidation, and codification which Skepticism ever after preserved. In that sense it may be allowed he is the first of Greek Skeptics.

Pyrrhôn's relation to the general Free-thought of Greece we have already glanced at. We must now consider those affinities, most of them of a Skeptical character, which he shares with Sokrates.

We saw in the case of Sokrates that he regarded his Nescience as an indispensable preliminary to knowledge. The sincere conviction of ignorance must, he thought, stimulate men to its attempted removal. Precisely the same effect was contemplated by the Pyrrhonists as the consequence of their more formal Epoché. The investigation that led up to suspense was not assumed to stop there. It was a condition of unstable equilibrium that presupposed a further expenditure of energy. It merely represented the resting-place between one search and the next. It was the Skeptic's verdict on the past rather than his anticipation of the future. In the future the conditions of the suspense might be changed, the balance of antitheticals become uneven, or a new impulse or direction might be imparted to the Zetetic energies of humanity. But concerning the future the Skeptic did not greatly trouble himself. He was satisfied, indeed he desired, that the future should be as the present, filled up with the congenial duties of suspense and search, the static and dynamic conditions of true intellectual existence. Besides being an incentive to further investigation, Epoché was imperative. The mere act of withholding assent considered apart from search and from its virtue as a deed of self-effacement was not regarded by the Skeptic as a state of ideal perfection—the crowning point of human excellence, as it might be depicted in imagination. It was conditioned not by abstract considerations and potentialities, but by actual necessities. There is a tacit agreement among all Skeptics on this point: they submit their system as a concession to the imperative demands of human existence, as an inevitable outcome of the relation of man to the universe. Epoché was therefore the unavoidable starting-point for humanity, and it operated—

1. Speculatively, by impelling men to search.

2. Ethically, by stimulating men to virtue.
3. Religiously, by inducing self-denial.
4. Finally, by engendering Ataxaria.

1. The first point I have already glanced at. We must always remember that to the active-minded and restless Greek, search was equivalent to knowledge, and whatever standpoint postulated search demanded knowledge. To us knowledge implies certitude, definitive, infallible. The Pyrrhonist, with his profounder insight into the conditions of things, disclaimed all such pretentious arrogance. To him it was a ceaseless inquiry, and Epoché was only the breathing space that heralded and prepared the way for another outburst of energy. We have already seen what a high, unselfish purposefulness this consideration induced in Sokrates. His Nescience was not the cry of despair, but of effort, buoyant, continuous, and untiring; we might compare it to the conviction of moral and spiritual imperfection which so many earnest religionists possess, and which not only incites to perfection, but itself increases, *pari passu*, with every successive advance in that direction.

Like Sokrates, Pyrrhôn was also a Zetetic philosopher. Give him material for search, for a juxtaposition of antitheticals, for Epoché, for a renewal of effort, and you gave him all that he needed for the complete formation and elaboration of a philosophy. His mind, restless, vivacious, untiring, needed not that complacency of knowledge and infallibility which more often deters from than incites to intellectual exertion. Although he sometimes indulged in the sweeping negations that form so easy and tempting a weapon against affirmative dogmatists, he was not forgetful that truths claiming to be unquestionable were but so many examples of finality, indications the intellect had attained on those specific points the end of its tether. Pyrrhôn therefore prosecuted the ceaseless search which ever after continued the distinguishing characteristic of Hellenic Skepticism. His efforts doubtless met with the same success in kind and degree as have always attended such disinterested inquiries. The wider and more complete the investigation, the more justifiable he found the Epoché from which it started, and to which it was destined ultimately to return.

2. More remarkable, perhaps, were the ideas of Sokrates, Pyrrhôn, and their Skeptical successors, as to the effect of Epoché regarded as a starting-point of ethical action. That Sokrates considered his Nescience to possess a moral significance, we have already seen. It was the active suppression of the self-conceit and opinionativeness which are so often the sources of youthful folly and recklessness.

It tended, by its counteraction of the selfish instincts, to induce that altruistic disposition which is the basis of all social and political life. Similarly Pyrrhôn regarded his abstention from decision as possessing an ethical signification. That he was correct from the standpoint of Greek thinkers, and in relation to their definition of Ethics as a branch of Politics, appears to me unquestionable. The self-distrust and humility it inculcated necessarily subordinated the individual to the community of which he formed a part. In the confessed absence of speculative and absolute certitude, it referred him to the conclusions of experience, to the approved lessons of social and political life, for standards of conduct and practice. Inherently such an authority might not be the highest conceivable, but it was the best obtainable, and even its defects, regarded from a standpoint of philosophy, were more than compensated by its entire harmony with the Greek conception of patriotism. For we must remember that among the foremost thinkers of Greece patriotism was far more than an ordinary human or even social duty. Its motives, sanctions, and prescriptions were esteemed sacred and divine. To a cultured Greek statesman, as, *e.g.* Perikles, his own country of Hellas or Attica was more an object of worship them the deities of Olympus. The existence and tangibility of its interests contrasted favourably with the incertitude in which both the being and attributes of the popular divinities were necessarily invested. The duty of sacrifice to Herê or Aphroditê might be questioned, the obligation of self-immolation if necessary at the shrine of patriotism, was indisputable. Now the Skeptical requirement of a complete deference on grounds of expediency to the laws, customs, and even religion of the State, admirably fell in with this conception of patriotism. It posited the State as an authority whose dictates, whatever their speculative incertitude, had a practical and utilitarian obligation which was irresistible. It is no uncommon objection against Skepticism that the excess of individualism it engenders tends to produce a disturbing influence in the social relations of mankind. This might be true of the negative dogmatism which often bears the name of Skepticism, it certainly is not true of the mere attitude of suspense. Of this, on the contrary, the normal effect is to induce an acquiescence in the thinker's environment, and a deference to customary standards and rules of action. It creates an aptitude and inclination for, not a repugnance to, social existence. I may observe that the connection thus indicated by Pyrrhôn between Epoché and political and ethical conduct is based on precisely the same principles that Jesuits and other extreme religious sectaries employ to procure unconditional sub-

mission to their teaching or authority. In each case the surrender of the individual volition or knowledge is regarded as a pre-requisite of membership.

But Pyrrhonic Epoché contributed to right moral conduct for another reason. By creating a kind of deadlock in the intellectual faculties, it compelled men to have recourse at once to practice, and to the social instincts which among cultured peoples serve as guides of practice. This was one main outcome of the Sokratic Nescience. Ratiocination on ethical subjects being uncertain in its conclusions, an appeal to the direct utterance of conscience, reason, duty, custom, became all the more essential. All Skeptics from Sokrates downward are agreed that difficulties in speculation must not be allowed to hamper, thwart, or even postpone obvious action. No impossibility of formulating an absolute definition of courage, *e.g.* could affect the duty of exemplifying it in any given emergency.

> Theirs not to reason why,
> Theirs but to do and die,

is the well-known principle of military obedience, and a similar rule obtains in the ordinary contingencies of life, immediate action being in most cases not only the best but the only solution of a difficulty. This subordination of speculation to the categorical imperative of duty is a principle common to all Skeptics. I need hardly point out that this stress on conscience as a rule of practice is in part the individual and subjective aspect of the obligation already considered of deferring to the laws, usages, and prescriptions of the community, for the conscience of every man will of necessity reflect the opinion of its environment. But among leading Skeptics the sacredness of the individual conscience is nevertheless carefully guarded. In the supreme instance of Sokrates, the authority of his Daimon was clearly regarded as paramount, and with other Skeptics there was generally a point where even the obligations of patriotism, semi-divine as they were, might be compelled to give place to the 'still small voice' of the man himself. Pyrrhôn, at any rate, emphasized the principle laid down by Sokrates. He required the wise man starting from the position of Epoché to look to the spontaneous utterance of his feelings, conscience, &c., for suggestions of action. Not only so, but he demanded that he should carefully train and mould his impulses so that their decision might not be erroneous. In effect—for this is the purport of his recommendation—he advised the creation of an artificial Daimon whenever a man unlike Sokrates might find himself unprovided with a natural one,

with the difference that its behests should be not only negative but positive as well.

This stress upon principles of action, external and internal, forms a necessary part of a general principle of all Skeptics—I mean their preference of practice to theory. Whether this characteristic is to be ascribed to a reaction of the energizing against the proved incertitude and incapacity of the speculative faculties, or as evincing a recognition that over-much cogitation tends to paralyse human activity, as in the well-known instance of Hamlet, is a question we need not decide. Probably both considerations co-operate in producing the idea. At any rate, it is common to modern as well as to ancient Skeptics. Montaigne and Charron, Lessing and Kant, have it no less than Sokrates and Pyrrhôn. All agree that action may be and often is independent of speculation, that it has a sphere of its own into which the 'nicely calculated less or more' of theoretic and probable considerations is not allowed to trespass. With the Greeks, as also with Montaigne, Agrippa, and other moderns, the outcome of this feeling was singular. It induced a stress on those sciences which related directly to human motives and rules of action, to the neglect of all theoretic science whatsoever. The disdain of Sokrates for physical science during the latter half of his life we have already noticed, as well as his contempt for the Sophists and the different arts they pretended to teach. Timon also eulogizes Pyrrhôn for his contempt of physicist researches: 'Thou dost not care to investigate whence comes the atmosphere that surrounds Hellas, or the source and final destiny of each single thing.' When we come to Sextos we shall find the greater part of his writings directed against the sciences of his day, and endeavouring to prove that their boasted rules and methods end only in self-contradiction and uncertainty. More anomalously, we find a similar distrust of theoretical knowledge even in a professed humanist like Montaigne. The French essayist, like his Greek predecessors, despises all mere book-learning, and regards with suspicion and contempt the physical-science efforts of his age. Here, then, we find the Skeptical distrust of theory in comparison with practice, of speculation compared with ethical action, attaining an extreme of obscurantism, which, whatever we may think of Skeptics as a class, is entirely opposed to their general tendencies.

3. Another of the affinities which Pyrrhôn and his school share with Sokrates is a perception of what might be called the religious nature of Skepticism and suspense. Pyrrhôn, we have seen, was chosen by the Elians as high-priest, the meaning of that office probably being that his precepts and example were regarded as

possessing a salutary, half-religious, half-moral influence. We have also seen that he was supposed to have derived his doctrines on the deceptiveness of outward phenomena, the duty of suppressing assertion, the importance of preserving a serenity that no outward agency could affect, as well as his practice of profound meditation, from the Gymnosophists of India. Both of these traditions point to Pyrrhôn's recognition of intellectual self-abnegation as possessing a religious significance. Nor would it be easy to show that Skepticism may not legitimately bear such a construction. In its essence it is a kind of self-denial, and that of the most difficult and painful character. It is the repression of certain instincts, vigorous in all men, vehement in most, in the direction of assertion or negation, and the greater the measure of Skepticism the more forcible the repression. Now this suppression of self in some form or other is a duty inculcated by all religions as well as by philosophies that claim a religious character. It is common, *e.g.* to Hindu philosophy, to Christianity, and to Greek thought.

In the first case the Sankhya philosopher and the Buddhist exercised self-denial—we might term it self-effacement—as a mode of attaining freedom from matter, final absorption, and Nirvana; the Christian thinker advocated it as a condition of service to God, or to facilitate the reception *ab extra* of ecclesiastical dogmas; the Greek philosopher considered it a salutary act of self-discipline likely to induce such virtues as ingenuousness, impartiality, and philosophical serenity. We shall see in our next discussion the lengths to which this principle was carried by Orientals; but the principle occupies no unimportant position in Greek philosophy, all its profounder and idealizing thinkers, from Pythagoras to Plotinos, recognizing its influence. Sokrates regarded his persistent repression of knowledge-consciousness both as a religious act of obedience to divine command and as a condition of moral progress. The long-continued silence demanded of the Pythagorean became in the Sokratic system the studied repression of all conviction. Both philosophers agreed in regarding dogmatic tendencies and the conceit of knowledge as marks of pride and self-consequence, which in the interests as well of the individual as of humanity it was desirable to suppress. These considerations will help us to understand the religious phase of Pyrrhôn's teaching. So far from laying down any novel theory when asserting the importance of suspense, he was only following some of the earliest traditions of Greek thought. He may have regarded himself as sharing with Pythagoras and Sokrates a divinely imposed mission to suppress imaginary knowledge. He certainly believed that the attempt was a religious

duty as inducing that self-distrustful, meek, and tranquil frame of mind which it is the aim of all religions to create. Nor was its moral efficacy less distinctly marked; for the man who, in virtue of his Epoché or the intellectual condition it implied, possessed sufficient command over himself as to repress assertion on all doubtful subjects, would not be readily led astray by more ordinary propensities and passions. At this point Pyrrhonic suspense touches that stern self-discipline which is the noblest characteristic of Stoicism. Its practical operation in the case of Pyrrhôn himself is shown by his opinion that nothing was worth striving for except virtue.

4. The Pyrrhonic employment of the term Ataraxia may possibly have been derived from Demokritos, but as to the thing signified there can be little doubt that Pyrrhôn, like other Skeptics, found the highest exemplification of that attainment in Sokrates. He was the perennial illustration to all subsequent thinkers of complete mental tranquillity. Whether the anecdote recorded of Pyrrhôn's protesting that life and death were indifferent, and, being asked why he did not die, replying because it was indifferent, be authentic or not, the story is hardly more than a corollary from the later scenes of Sokrates's life. If any man ever manifested a sincere conviction of the indifference of life and death, it was Sokrates: nor can it be questioned that this feeling was a distinct and inevitable product of his teaching. Had he been careful of logical definition and systematization, he might have devised some term with the same meaning as Ataraxia in order to mark the philosophical serenity which was the outcome of his principles; but this was a methodical conception of philosophy absolutely prohibited by his starting-point of Nescience. Sokrates was in this particular much more clear-sighted than the later schools of Greek Skeptics. He discerned the incongruity between a profession of personal ignorance and a systematized scheme of philosophy. With the Pyrrhonists and their successors, however, Ataraxia was only one of many terms and formulas employed to denote complete intellectual immobility, the Nirvana of Greek philosophy. Pyrrhôn's manifestation of this characteristic was so transcendent that Timon compared him to a god. In conjunction with this phase of Sokratic and Pyrrhonic teaching, and connecting it still further with Hindu speculation, is the fact that both Sokrates and Pyrrhôn seem to have practised the absorbed reverie so characteristic of Oriental thinkers. One of the best-attested stories in the history of Sokrates is his having remained on one occasion in a state of rapt meditation for a whole night, and the same peculiarity is satirized by Aristophanes so as to imply that it was a common habit of his life; indeed

this was only the natural consequence of a persistent observance of the injunction 'Know thyself,' no man engaged in earnest introspection being able always to avoid that self-concentration which takes the form of reverie. The same trait is manifested also in Pyrrhôn's character. He recommended profound meditation to his disciples as a method of self-discipline, and as likely to induce ethical perfection. I have mentioned the anecdote of his having been once asked by a disciple the meaning of his contemplative moods, when he replied that he was studying how to become more virtuous. Another of the stories bearing on this point is a little ludicrous. Pyrrhôn being once in a storm-tossed ship, when his fellow-passengers were terrified lest they should be drowned, the philosopher, who displayed the utmost indifference, directed their attention to a pig composedly feeding on deck as an example of undisturbed serenity—porcine Ataraxia, we might term it—which they might worthily emulate. When we come to later Skeptics we shall find this apathy shading off into a mystic idealism and self-extinction little if at all distinguishable from Oriental Nihilism.

Enough has now been advanced as to their community of views and methods to identify Sokrates and Pyrrhôn as men of similar disposition, and as followers of a common Skepticism. Nor are we left in forming this conclusion to a comparison of incidental traits which the traditionary portraits of the two thinkers reveal to us. We have the direct evidence of Sextos Empeirikos and Cicero for the fact that Sokrates was regarded as a high authority by Pyrrhonists, and that different sects of Skeptics called themselves by his name. Hence whatever distinction scholars of the nineteenth century, in the plenitude of their historical infallibility, have made between Sokrates and Pyrrhôn, Greek writers who lived within four centuries after their death, when their traditions were still alive among the schools and disciples created by them, recognized no such difference. 'The conjecture is not improbable,' says Brandis, 'that Pyrrhôn regarded the great Athenian as his pattern.'[1] To me it rather seems that they were men in kind of precisely similar intellectual idiosyncrasy, who, starting from the same standpoint, pursued the same method in order to arrive at the same goal. Setting aside the difference of greater elaboration and systematization in the latter thinker, the chief difference between the men relates to the singular diversity of their fates, the hemlock cup in Athens contrasted with a high-priesthood at Elis, as to which a contemporary of Pyrrhôn might have written:—

Ille crucem sceleris pretium tulit, hic diadêma.

[1] Article in Smith's *Dictionary of Biography* on Pyrrhôn.

Reasons of time, place, and general circumstances would, however, go far to account for this disparity.

But contrasted as schools, the Pyrrhonists, as already remarked, manifest one important divergency from the principles of Sokrates. They represent the transition of pure suspense into negation. Instead of the Sokratic 'I am ignorant,' the formula becomes general, 'All men are ignorant;' in other words, truth is inconceivable. We are able to trace this transition from the subjective to the objective, from the singular to the universal, by the increase of Skeptical axioms beginning with 'all,' or some similar formula of universalism, to which I need hardly say pure Skepticism has no right. Such propositions as 'Truth does not exist,' 'Nothing can be known,' which were to emerge in Greek Skepticism, are negative dogmas, and of the most unjustifiable kind. Indeed, a more glaring instance of *non sequitur* it would be impossible to formulate than the inference from the equipoise of particular contradictories or from individual Nescience that all truth is impossible. It is just this hasty conclusion from the individual to the universe that constitutes the foundation of all intolerant and supercilious dogmatism, and it matters not whether the inference is made in a negative or a positive direction. So far, then, as Pyrrhôn or his followers accepted negative or even largely impersonal conclusions, they evacuated the only safe or justifiable position of the Skeptic, the personal conviction asserted by Sokrates. As a result of these negative tendencies developed by Pyrrhôn's successors, we have even now the term Pyrrhonism employed to signify negation as well as non-affirmation, so that pure Skepticism has been generally confounded with a determinate denial just as hostile to its own standpoint as dogmatic assertion. We may perhaps partly account for this negative development of Pyrrhonists by the growth of peripatetic dogma during the fourth century B.C. It certainly appears a rule in the history of Greek and every other Skepticism that its juxtaposition with positive dogma is certain to produce an additional stress on negation. When therefore this is manifested, perhaps in excess, by those who professedly start from a position of suspense, it should be regarded as an offensive polemic against avowed adversaries rather than the defence of their own position. Skeptical controversialists, I am bound to admit, are not a whit fairer or more scrupulous than those of any other kind.

The name of Timon[1] is so associated with his master Pyrrhôn that few separate remarks are needed to describe him. He is best

[1] On Timon compare the exhaustive monograph of Wachsmuth, *De Timone Phliasio*.

known for certain satirical poems in which he attacked dogmatic systems and authors of every kind. He also expounded the leading principles of Pyrrhonic thought in some terse and pungent verses.[1] The animus revealed by Timon against dissentients from and opponents to the Skeptical method illustrates that controversial unfairness of which all the later Skeptics supply us with examples. Speculatively a complete Skeptic, he however agrees with Pyrrhôn that virtue is the supreme good of man.[2]

The New Academy (*Arkesilaos*).

The precise mean in philosophical speculation is as hard to preserve as in ethical practice. The common object both of Sokratic Nescience and Pyrrhonic Epoché was to form a barrier against dogmatism or unfounded and arrogant knowledge; but the history of Pyrrhonism shows us that the barrier broke down, and that not by the attacks of its enemies, but by the over zeal and indiscretion of its adherents. No fatality is more common in the history of philosophical principles than that which awaits them by the exaggerated care of their friends. Philosophers being—underneath the long flowing cloaks of systems and dogmas—only ordinary mortals, occasionally condescend to human weakness. Hence they sometimes treat their principles like Puff's actors in 'The Critic'—'Give them a good thing, and they never know when to have done with it.' The Pyrrhonists treated their starting-point of Epoché in this fashion. They extended, generalized, universalized its implication until it became absolute negation. The next move in the history of Greek Skepticism was therefore reactionary. Recoiling from a conception of philosophy which made both itself and the search accompanying it illusory, Greek thought manifested a desire to start afresh from the teachings of Sokrates and the idealism of Plato. Of this movement, our chief exponent is Arkesilaos. This thinker was born at Pitane in Æolia about 315 or 316 B.C. Having first studied in his native town under a mathematician, Autolykos, he came to Athens and put himself under the teaching of the Peripatetics; but he soon joined the Academics, under the tuition of Krantor, and became a leading teacher among those who still kept to the traditions of Plato. We are told also that he gave much attention to Pyrrhôn, and a parody of a Homeric line was employed to describe his masters—

Plato the first, Pyrrhôn the last, between these Diodorus

—an order which, I suspect, we are to take not as chronological, but

[1] Wachsmuth, p. 13. [2] Sext. Emp. *adv. Math.* xi. § 20.

as marking his own ultimate philosophical preference. Diogenes Laertius recounts many anecdotes illustrative of his personal habits and disposition. His favourite author, we are informed, was Homer, whom he was accustomed to read every night before retiring to rest. We may incidentally notice that Homer was the author most read for purposes of relaxation by all the later Greek Skeptics, a preference which may probably be accounted for by the well-known fact that Idealists and Skeptics delight in occasional contemplations of a realism alien to their general methods. Arkesilaos was known for his eloquence and for a complete mastery over those words and phrases which as a Skeptic he distrusted. He possessed a keen incisive wit and a talent for Sokratic irony which he did not scruple to employ on philosophical bigots or unidea'd obscurantists. Utterly despising wealth, he was profusely charitable, especially to needy scholars and thinkers. He was entirely free from the small vices of professional jealousy. Though himself the head of a philosophical school, he was not offended if a pupil displayed a preference for a rival teacher. He thus practically exemplified one of the most fundamental maxims of Skepticism—the innate idiosyncrasy of every individual thinker. Anecdotes are related of his having himself taken such dissentient pupils and committed them to the charge of other masters. He lived the modest, retiring life of a studious recluse, declining to take any part in political matters, and rarely leaving his home. He died at the good old age of seventy-five.

The intellectual career of Arkesilaos, so far as we are able to determine it from the scattered and fragmentary intimations which constitute the whole of our information on the subject, consists of two moments or thought-directions :—

1st. The negative tendencies of Pyrrhonists and the positive dogma of Stoics suggested an appeal to the standpoint of Sokrates; in other words, Arkesilaos endeavoured to reassert personal Nescience or pure suspense as the inquirer's true position.

2nd. Having destroyed by means of his Skeptical methods the principal dogmatic schemes then current, he tried to substitute for them a system more or less developed of Platonic idealism.

1. The Skeptical positions of Arkesilaos are more strongly marked in the traditions recorded of him than his later constructive Platonism. He not only reaffirmed the Sokratic principle of Nescience, but he endeavoured to accentuate it. To the profession of ignorance of all things, he added that he was ignorant even of his ignorance. He would not dare to affirm his standpoint of non-

affirmation. Waiving the self-contradictory character of this proposition, we may regard it as denoting an approach to that idealistic nihilism which we shall find in its perfection among Hindu thinkers. We must, however, prepare ourselves for similar manifestations of extreme Skepticism in what is left to us of Greek philosophy, where aversion to simple affirmation even of principles inherently Skeptical is often carried to a ludicrous excess. At the same time, this reassertion of Sokratic Nescience seems to prove that Arkesilaos recognized the individual subjective standpoint which in ultimate ratiocination is the only firm basis of Skepticism, and which the later Pyrrhonists appear to have lost sight of. But with the Sokratic Nescience Arkesilaos also combined the more formal Epoché of the Pyrrhonists. Maintaining the ordinary Skeptical principle, that a counter-proposition of equal validity might be opposed to every propounded proposition, he declared suspense to be the only safe standpoint for the wise man. To search for these antitheticals constituted the main occupation of the Skeptic, to juxtaposit them so as to attain a perfect equivalence was the culminating proof of his intellectual dexterity. Though often and justly chargeable with unscrupulousness, he was yet theoretically anxious that his subjective feeling of suspense should be really as well as nominally justified by an external condition of antinomy. Any inequality in the antitheticals would necessarily prejudice if not imperil its proper outcome of mental neutrality, and it was to guard against this result that the Skeptic was enjoined to employ all the resources of his investigation. Here again it seems pertinent to remark that this conception of search, which we shall find in the whole remaining portion of Greek Skepticism, did not necessarily imply, as often supposed, an unprincipled dissatisfaction with every assertion that might be preferred, the licence or insolence of contradiction, as Augustine termed it. In some cases, perhaps, it may have produced this result, for it is a great mistake to suppose that Skeptics any more than sectaries or thinkers of any other kind invariably applied their common principles in precisely the same manner. The position of search signified the outlook of the far-sighted, versatile, many-sided thinker, to whom every truth was a nucleus of numberless complex relations, each of which must be determined before a final conclusion could be formed. It sprang from a conviction, common to all the profounder thinkers of Greece, of the infinity of all truth. It was a well-founded distrust of the ability of any human being to attain infallibility on any matter of pure speculation. It also embodied a feeling—itself, too, a product of the earliest Hellenic

speculation—that language was an imperfect instrumentality for fully expressing all the many-sided aspects that pertain to every truth. Oftentimes it was the protest of a man on the top of a high mountain against the horizon limitations affirmed by his brother on the plain. Nothing can be more evident than the happy results of this perpetual keen-sighted search regarded only as an instrument of culture. It produced a marvellous facility for detecting doubtful or imperfect truths, an instinctive recognition of the manifold diversiform phases that every speculative or moral truth must necessarily possess. It created a readiness to estimate diverse degrees of probability, it engendered a taste for comprehension, for an all-inclusive catholicity in respect of the area and materials of investigation, which at any rate rendered a bigoted or narrow judgment impossible. Setting aside the direct consequences assigned it by the Skeptics, and its occasional employment to establish a deadlock of conflicting antitheticals, the method was clearly valuable in itself, and was admirably adapted to meet human exigencies. It would be difficult to conceive any philosophy as possessing ill tendencies or as being unsuitable for humanity that proclaimed search to be an indispensable part of its method. Arkesilaos, moreover, pursued Sokratic tactics in his intercourse towards others. We are told that in conversation with disciples he suppressed his own convictions, that is, he proclaimed his own Nescience, and directed his attention to extracting and testing their supposed certainties. From this standpoint of Agnosticism he regarded the different dogmatic systems current in his time; he treated Peripatetics, Stoics, Epikoureans as Sokrates had treated the formal teachings of the Sophists. We are told that he likened the formal Dialectic of Aristotle and the Stoics to thimble-rigging—indeed, the uselessness and unscrupulous nature of logic considered as a method of dogma may be regarded as one of the foremost traditions of the new Academy. It possessed, as we know, the combined authority of Sokrates and Plato. Another Sokratic standpoint shared by Arkesilaos was the distinction between speculation and practice. His own blameless, modest, unselfish life was a proof that in his own case the supposed freedom of his philosophical opinions had proved no detriment to his moral conduct, social duties being governed by other considerations than those which govern abstract truths. We have seen in the case of Pyrrhôn how strong a basis for practical ethics was found in the Greek virtue of patriotism. The Skeptic was enjoined to submit dutifully to the laws, religion, social customs, &c. of his country. With the new Academy

the same duties are based on a more general and abstract principle, viz. 'Probability is the rule of conduct.' We shall have to discuss the bearings of the Academic theory of probabilism more fully when we come to Karneades, its greatest exponent; here we will only remark that as a rule of ethics it serves to express the consciousness that social duties, laws, and other bonds of human societies are *à priori* likely to be based on what long experience has determined to be expedient. So that in this sense probability is only a formal and generalized expression of the 'common-sense' which as a rule governs the conduct of communities.

Much of the form of Arkesilaos's Skepticism was doubtless determined by the polemical relation of the new Academy to the extreme dogmatism of the Stoics; and this too we shall have another opportunity for discussing when we come to Karneades. We may for the present bear in mind that the Stoics claimed demonstrative certitude as the combined result of the exercise of their physical senses and of their reason. They also insisted so strongly on the reality of the phenomenal world as almost to fall into materialism. Arkesilaos opposed both of these tenets. As to the former, he denied that the Stoic could attain certitude either by his senses or by his reason; as to the latter, he met the materialism of his adversaries by a counter-movement of idealism, taking as his guide the teaching of Plato.

2. At this point we arrive at the second of the thought-directions of Arkesilaos, his constructive idealism. Having destroyed by methodical Skepticism the chiefest dogma-schemes current in his time, he seems to have tried to erect in their place a system more or less developed of Platonic Transcendentalism. The nature of this we are only able to guess from certain obscure and indirect hints. Thus Sextos tells us of the tradition that Arkesilaos had employed his Skeptical battery to clear the way and prepare the ground for Platonic dogma; and the same testimony is also given by other writers. It has been observed also that he is generally left out of the enumeration of Academics when the absolute deniers of truth belonging to that school are reckoned, as if his standpoint in that particular was not altogether unquestionable.[1] We find too that his severance from Timon and the Pyrrhonists was greater than could be accounted for by his adoption of a Skeptical attitude in opposition to their determined negation. Though Timon praises him in one of his writings, he seems to have shown towards him that mixture of indignation and bitter contempt which he was accustomed to bestow upon dogmatists of all creeds. Diogenes

[1] Dr. Haas, *De Phil. Scept. Successionibus*, p. 20.

relates that when Timon first saw Arkesilaos among his own disciples he asked him, 'What doest thou here in our domains who are free men?' and being in turn questioned by Arkesilaos why he had left Thebes to come to Athens, answered, 'To be amused by watching you in your lofty flights,' from which we may infer that Arkesilaos carried his Platonism to some extreme of mysticism. Nor is this transition either improbable or uncommon. On the contrary, the intimate relation of Skepticism and Idealism is a fact that we shall have repeated opportunities for exemplifying in the course of our investigations. Distinctly marked in the intellectual career of prominent thinkers, it is abundantly attested by special historical epochs. In the case of Plato, the Skeptical starting-point of Sokrates is finally developed into a transcendentalism almost akin to mysticism. Giordano Bruno, William of Ockam, and other Skeptics represent a similar transformation. Indeed, whenever we find a consistent idealist, we may always be certain that the starting-point of his mental evolution has been Skeptical. In history, too, the same fact is shown by the Neo-Platonism which followed the final development of Greek Skepticism—by the idealism of Italian thinkers which set in when the Free-thought of the Renaissance had done its work—by the similar appearance of Quietism in France during the seventeenth century following the Skepticism of the two previous centuries—and by the idealism which emerged in Germany, after the wave of free-thought heralded by the French Revolution and its own 'Storm and stress' had spent its force. Nor is it difficult to determine the probable conditions of Arkesilaos's evolution from Skepticism to idealism. We need not have recourse to the theory,[1] that having demolished all other sources of dogma he attempted arbitrarily to supply their place with his own subjective intuitions and imaginative fictions. It is more reasonable to suppose that the introspection which lay at the basis of the Sokratic 'Know thyself,' the determined appeal in every case of doubt to the verdict of consciousness —the very ground principles of Skepticism—may at last have culminated in the adoption of a few subjective theories or presumedly ascertained truths as the foundation of a dogmatic idealism; in other words, Arkesilaos might easily have taken his own personal tests of, and ideas concerning, truth, as possessing not only a subjective but an objective validity. He would thus be an illustration of one of the most ordinary processes of philosophical psychology.

[1] Suggested by Prantl, *Uebersicht der Griech-Römisch Philosophie*, p. 181.

I am, however, far from wishing to exaggerate the constructive idealism of Arkesilaos, especially in our ignorance of its precise extent. There are forms of transcendentalism so closely allied with the denial of physical and rational certitude as to render it difficult to discriminate between them. At bottom Arkesilaos was a Skeptic of the Sokratic pattern. His impulses and efforts were all in the direction of Free-thought. With the sympathetic comprehensiveness which is an inseparable concomitant of expansive intellection he recognised the inherently free tendency of all the higher forms of Hellenic thought. Though Sokrates was his supreme exemplar of Skepticism, he saw that the same characteristic in varied forms pertained to many of his predecessors in the regal line of Greek thinkers. We are told that he directed attention to the Skeptical maxims not only of Sokrates and Plato, but of Anaxagoras, Empedokles, Demokritos, Herakleitos, and Parmenides. He is thus the first who distinctly pointed out the intellectual freedom, the spiritual emancipation from dogma, which is the prime attribute, the collective spirit, of Hellenic speculation, and which historians of philosophy, most of them allies of dogmatism, have either overlooked or unjustifiably minimized.

The reactionary influence of Arkesilaos seems to have died with him, for his successors became undistinguished from the Pyrrhonists; indeed, there seems ample ground for assuming that after his death there was an amalgamation of the two schools.[1] There was, as we have noticed, a sufficiently large body of common principles and methods to connect the disciples of Sokrates with the followers of Pyrrhôn. It is quite possible, too, that the renewed attention to the purer form of Sokratic Skepticism might have contributed to the alliance of the two schools, when the obstacle of his own Platonic Dogmatism had been removed by his death.

Karneades,

one of the most remarkable thinkers in the whole of Greek philosophy, and the undoubted chief of the Academy, was born in Cyrene about 213 or 214 B.C. He is said to have studied under Hegesinos, an Academic teacher, and also under Diogenes and Chrysippos the Stoics. Indeed, he seems to have given his attention to the whole field of Greek thought, for we are told that his Skepticism was directed against all preceding philosophers. He thus partook of the comprehensive many-sided culture which all the Greek Skeptics affected. One of the best known of the few

[1] Dr. Haas, *Op. cit.* p. 49.

recognised traditions of his life is his embassy to Rome, where his eloquence, versatility, dialectical subtlety, and Skeptical ratiocination produced such a startling effect. The anecdote is of peculiar interest as representing the first marked encounter in history between Greek speculation and Free-thought and Roman narrowness and dogma. Karneades died at the advanced age of eighty-five, or according to some writers ninety, years, and is thus another example of the longevity of professed cultivators of Ataraxia. His character is painted in eulogistic colours by friends and disciples. Intellectually his chief attributes were a peculiarly incisive acuteness combined with profundity of thought, a quick and vivacious temperament, a marvellous command of language, and a wonderful skill in the arts of persuasion, a dialectic agile, dexterous, and versatile, an invincible persistency of purpose which abandoned no problem until it had been exhaustively discussed and left no opponent unvanquished. Personally and morally his own habitual serenity prove that his boast of Ataraxia was not unfounded, and notwithstanding his dialectical subtlety and his speculative reasoning on every side of a subject—playing like Sokrates both sides of the game as well in ethical as in intellectual questions—his own conduct was distinguished by moral purity and undeviating rectitude. Like others of the later Greek thinkers, Karneades left behind him no writings, except a few unimportant letters; but in his case we are better supplied than usual with reliable traditions as to his teachings, by means of their ample mention and discussion by Sextos Empeirikos, and in the philosophical works of Cicero.

With Karneades and the most flourishing period of the Academy which he represents, we come in contact with the completest and most determined form of dogma to be found in the whole range of Greek philosophy, I mean Stoicism. The porch whence it issued might indeed be termed the central temple of Hellenic dogma-systems, or, varying the simile, we might term it the Calvinism of Greek thought; for just as Calvin gathered together and concentrated in a coherent logical system all the dogmatiable elements of Christianity, or what appeared to him to be such, so Stoicism consolidated and codified all the more positive moments in Hellenic philosophy. Thus it unified the conceptions of the people and the methods of philosophers. It comprehended and systematized the scientific principles and aims of the Peripatetics; the austere morality of the Cynics; the vigorous self-repression of the Skeptics; the stress on practice as contrasted with theory, and the pursuit of Ataraxia which were common to all the later schemes of Hellenic speculation; as well as the chief convictions of the nation on the subjects of fate

and providence. It included, therefore, every department of human thought; theology, physical science, politics, as well as metaphysical philosophy. Stoicism was, moreover, related to Academic Skepticism, as Peripateticism and other forms of dogma had been to prior schemes of Free-thought. It constituted the positive system in regard of which Academic doubt was the disintegrating force. To a certain extent Stoicism, like other dogma-schemes, determined the nature of the Skepticism opposed to it, just as the positive strength, &c. of a beleaguered fortress suggests the methods of attack best adapted to subdue it; and this relation is signified in the well-known saying of Karneades, 'Unless Chrysippos (the chief of the Stoics after Zenon) had existed, I had not been.' It is therefore necessary to observe, summarizing as much as possible the leading positions assailed by Karneades, that the Stoics professed to have discovered a source of indubitable certainty, firstly in the manner in which human cognition was attained, or the junction of subject and object in what they termed 'comprehensible perception.' Secondly, they claimed certitude for their scheme of definite science as to the outer world. They were, in a word, dogmatic both as to the subjective method and the objective form and substance of knowledge.

Karneades attacked this twofold infallibility by denying that there could be any criterion of demonstrable truth, neither sensation, reason, nor imagination being competent to furnish it, for all of these were liable to deception. Besides, even if a criterion of truth were admitted, it could not exist apart from consciousness. Now an animal differs from lifeless things in possessing a capacity of sensation by means of which it perceives external objects. As long as this susceptibility is unawakened, it perceives nothing; but being aroused and as it were modified by external objects, it perceives them. The criterion of truth must therefore be looked for in the act of conscious perception, but this act must needs indicate both the subject and also the junction of the subject with the object in consciousness; the conscious act being inseparable from the mental image or object of thought.[1]

We have here, I need hardly point out, the primary position of all idealism, and a standpoint which will always render Skepticism an integral part of human speculation. The Stoic asserted the independent reality of the outer world. His 'comprehensible perception,' the mental image formed by his sensations, he regarded as indubitably and objectively true. Karneades demurred to this conclusion. All that sensation revealed was itself, regarded as a

[1] Sext. Emp. *adv. Math.* vii. 159–61. Comp. Mr. Levin's work above cited, pp. 94–96.

subjective phenomenon. A given act of perception was no more than the change or modification produced by an unknown external object on the consciousness, and the Academics might have defined the material universe in the terms of Mill as an assemblage of 'possibilities of sensation.' Nominally they discriminated in every such sensation between the receptive subject and the object subjectively received, maintaining, however, their real indissolubility in the perceptive act. Thus both the organ and content of knowledge were subjective. Of the outer world as something existing apart both from the thinker and from his powers of perception, sensation revealed nothing. There was no possibility of comparison between the mental representation and its external conditioning object. No man could take up a standpoint outside of himself so as to adjudicate impartially between his subjective impression and its objective cause. He was himself an intrinsic, inseparable part of the impression. The 'comprehensible phantasm' was to a great extent his own creation, from whose conditions it was impossible to escape. Although man was not, as the Stoics averred, the helpless, passive victim of his senses and their external determinations, the subjective conditions of receptivity forming no unimportant factor in the formation of every comprehensible phantasm, yet he possessed no other knowledge than what they furnished. He had no independent standard of veracity that would enable him to ascertain whether the verdict of his senses was or was not correct. No doubt from his own point of view an idealist Skeptic like Karneades will always be triumphant over the crude materialist or the dogmatic assertor of external reality. Plato himself had already and long since shown how the victory of subjectivity might be won. Nay, long prior to Plato the polemic of Karneades against the Stoics had been foreshadowed by the opposition of the Eleatics to their materializing adversaries.

Not that Karneades's position was a definitive idealism. He saw that the validity of external sensations, the 'comprehensible perceptions' of the Stoics, was open to fair question; but had any of his own disciples of extreme Platonic sympathies asked, 'If our subjective impressions do not warrant the conclusion of an external world as an indubitable object of knowledge, may we take it for granted that they are themselves images of an ideal world?' he would no doubt have answered in the negative.[1] From his Skeptical standpoint he would have pointed out that the receptive

[1] His ratiocination, however, seems to have been regarded as leaning in this direction, as is shown by the tradition that, like Arkesilaos, his ultimate conclusions were those of Platonic dogmatism.

faculties are themselves liable to change and uncertainty arising from diversity of conditions, powers, &c., so that any inference in the direction of dogma or perpetuity from such diversiform deliverances of consciousness would be palpably absurd.[1] As a rule Skeptics, and Karneades is an especial illustration, are keen introspectionists. They watch the kaleidoscopic fluctuations of consciousness, the perpetual ebb and flow of emotion, the thousand-fold variations of subjectivity, with as much ardour as the continual changes which take place in the outer world; and if they are unwilling to formulate positive systems of knowledge from their changeful environment, still less are they inclined to do so from the *divers et ondoyant* receptivity that constitutes its only possible realization. We may note in passing that Karneades is fighting against the Stoics precisely the same battle as William of Ockam against the mediæval realists. In both instances the weapons and the aims are the same. Idealism is employed as the natural enemy of dogma to subdue in the one case theological realism, in the other philosophical materialism, and in both to prepare the way for a certain proportion of intellectual freedom.

But we have not yet exhausted the idealistic polemic of Karneades against the Stoics. Not only is man incapable of comparing the actual outward object as such with his own subjective impression, but the instrumentality by means of which he attains the former is itself imperfect and deceptive. Man derives all his knowledge through the inlets of his senses; but who does not know their incertitude, their perpetual liability to error? Hence arises the impossibility of discriminating true from false representations, and the significance of the Skeptic's stress upon mere phenomena regarded as modifications of the individual's subjectivity, and irrespective of their possible truth or falsehood from an independent or absolute point of view. The Stoics asserted that a true representation in consciousness, 'comprehensible perception,' was one that could not refer to non-existent things; but Karneades met them with the patent objection that dreams, visions, and mental delusions were capable of inducing in their subjects representations which, really false, could not be distinguished from true. Here Karneades stood on ground that had long been industriously cultivated by Greek Skeptics. The innumerable mistakes, uncertainties, diversities of sense-operations, had, as we shall see more fully under Ainesidemos, been reduced to something like a system. The mine

[1] The Greek Skeptics, as a designation of contempt for the metaphysical creations of idealism when asserted as absolute or independent truths, employed the expressive term *εἰδωλοποιήσεις*, 'image-making.'

had been so thoroughly worked that the labours of modern Skeptics eagerly directed to further excavation have been well-nigh fruitless.

The result of Karneades's polemic against the conceptual certitude of the Stoics was affirmed in the general formula, 'All things are incomprehensible;' in other words, there is no method, either by the operation of the senses, the reason, or the imagination, by means of which true mental representations may completely and in every case be discriminated from false. No doubt this generalization from individuals to the race is itself a departure from pure Skepticism. No man not endowed with omniscience can demonstratively assert that 'all things are incomprehensible,' any more than he can another dictum of the Academics, viz. 'Truth is unattainable.' Hence we observe that, like the disciples of Pyrrhôn, the Academics were inclined to push their suspense to absolute negation, and Sextos Empeirikos criticizes them with severity on this account.[1]

II. Besides demolishing the subjective certainty claimed by the Stoics, Karneades also attacks their general system of positive convictions, theological, physical, and ethical. He demurs to the Stoic argument of the *consensus gentium* (the substantial agreement of all peoples) as a sufficient ground for the existence of deity; adding that even if it could be proved it would be valueless because of the ignorance of the great majority of mankind—the jury to which the verdict was hypothetically entrusted. He also combats the popular idea of providence with its stress upon dreams, omens, prophecy, and similar superstitions. And here I may parenthetically observe that the later Greek Skeptics did singular service to the general cause of human enlightenment by vigorously attacking the beliefs in divination, astrology, magic, &c. that seemed to grow in intensity with the gradual weakening of the popular faith in the old deities of Olympus. Sextos Empeirikos, writing at the beginning of the third century of the Christian era, was not only more advanced on this point than the Christian bishops of his own time, but was more enlightened than most Christian philosophers up to the sixteenth century, Lord Bacon included. Against the Stoic conception of an animated and reason-ruled universe, Karneades urges the difficulty of its proof and the indications occasionally presented by the world of processes and events irreconcilable with ordinary human reason. The Stoics affirmed that man was the sole end of creation; Karneades replied by pointing out the numberless sufferings and dangers to which he was liable,

[1] Comp. on this point the remarks of M. Saisset in his art. *Sextus*, in the *Dict. d. Sci. Phil.*

and especially—the favourite subject of Greek tragedy—the evil destiny of the noblest and most virtuous among men. Nor could it be demonstrated that human reason itself was the highest gift, for the exercise of the same faculty sometimes tended to debase its possessors. Besides, even granting the Stoic conclusion that 'this is the best of all possible worlds,' this of itself would not prove its government by deity, for it might conceivably have become so by the operation of purely natural causes. The assumption that the universe is governed by reason because man is a rational being is clearly a case of *non sequitur*, because either condition might be conceived as independent of the other. Karneades insists that the conception of deity as a living being presupposed for us the attributes that we know to be inseparable from life, viz. liability to disease, decay, and death. Similarly the moral qualities ascribed to deity must be conceived by us in accordance with our own knowledge of their nature and operation. Virtue, *e.g.* presupposes effort and a victory over temptation. On every hand, therefore, we see, pleads Karneades, that the deity is circumscribed, according to the highest ideas we can frame of him, by the same conditions of finality that pertain to ourselves. I need not point out that the basis of his argument, as that of all Greek Skeptics on the same subject, is the inability of transcending the finite and fallible conditions of humanity in estimating the nature and attributes of deity, and hence the unavoidable recourse to a greater or less degree of anthropomorphism. Whether we conceive deity as material or spiritual, limited or boundless, we are met on every side by contradictions and inconceivabilities. The ordinary polytheism of the Greeks Karneades combats, by showing how the old mythological divinities are only abstractions and idealizations of physical powers, and he makes good use of the obvious argument derivable from irreconcilable traditions concerning them. The similarly popular Hellenic conception of fate as the omnipotent controller of gods and men, Karneades resists as being irreconcilable with human liberty. He apparently agrees with the Epikoureans as to the freedom and spontaneity of the self-determinations of consciousness, without, however, granting that they were the outcome of chance. Here again he opposed a free intellectualism to what was, in reality, the slavish materialism of the Stoics.

One might not unfairly conclude from the direction of these ratiocinations that Karneades was an Atheist. Such a supposition would, however, be erroneous. Cicero, who had every opportunity of knowing, and who ranks in history as the most illustrious disciple of Karneades, expressly tells us that 'he employed these

arguments not to destroy belief in the gods, for what were less befitting a philosopher, but to convince the Stoics that their explications concerning the gods were unsatisfactory.' 'Perhaps,' as a recent writer suggests, 'the divinity of the Academicians was that unknown god whom St. Paul told the Athenians that having ignorantly worshipped he now declared unto them.'[1] In truth, Karneades's contention against the theology of the Stoics is reconcilable with more than one hypothesis as to his own personal conviction of the being of a god. Thus he might have accepted it as a simple deliverance of his instinct, feeling, or intuition—a categorical imperative impatient and incapable of demonstration. The Academics, if we may credit their prime witness, Cicero, undoubtedly believed in a class of truths which were above and beyond human reasoning, for which indeed they had the sanction of Sokrates himself.[2] Nor must we forget that Karneades, in this respect also like Sokrates and Pyrrhôn, drew a distinction between pure speculation and practice. The first was the realm of the intellect, keen, vivacious, comprehensive; the second, the territory of human action, of social regulations and practical expediency. I may add, as an answer to much misconception on the general subject, that nothing could be more opposed to the genuine spirit of Greek Skepticism, from Xenophanes to Sextos Empeirikos, than a decisive and unqualified Atheism. Men so far-sighted and profound as these thinkers were would not be likely to commit themselves to the dialectic mistake of categorically denying what was incapable of demonstrative proof. Their own position in the matter was, theoretically, suspense; and practically a conformity to the religious usages of those around them. No doubt they tested severely and combated vigorously the arguments of theologians for the existence of deity, and so produced an impression of their hostility to the belief; but all they desired, all they had a right to establish, was the justification of their own suspensive and modest attitude.

Similar considerations will help us to understand the ethics of Karneades. The anecdote, to which I have already alluded, of his pleading at Rome both for and against political justice, which so excited the ire of Cato, may be taken as illustrating his ethical teaching. Indeed, this is no other than the customary method of such teaching among Greek Free-thinkers from the Sophists and

[1] Mr. Levin's *Lectures*, p. 88.

[2] Comp. the remarkable words of Cicero on the existence of the gods: 'Affers hæc omnia argumenta, cur dii sint: remque meâ sententia minime dubiam, *argumentando dubiam facis*.' *De Nat. Deor.* iii. 4.

Sokrates downwards. Here also we see emerging the distinction between speculation and practice, or between the absolute and the relative in moral science. The Romans, with their lack of mental training and their utter indifference to philosophical studies, failed to appreciate a principle that pervades the whole history of Greek philosophy. As a matter of speculation, of intuition, and ethical spontaneity, Karneades had no difficulty in proving that justice must be affirmed to exist; but as a matter of fact, of expediency, of the supposed needs of social life, it was merely a synonym for political utility. Cato was probably less offended at the latitudinarian speculation of the wily Greek than with his bold but inconvenient illustration of the political immorality which, under the profaned attributes of justice, had always marked Roman polity. As to the preference historians have generally manifested for Cato as opposed to Karneades, that is merely one of numberless instances of the common prejudice that accepts dogmatism, even when combined with Philistine narrowness and gross immorality, as superior to free speculation, though associated with rectitude and moral purity. Notwithstanding his Eristic, Karneades's idea of true justice, and his personal efforts to attain and insure it, were clearly of a much higher order than the knowledge and practice of Cato.

But the efforts of Karneades were not limited to undermining the dogma of the Stoics; he carried his metaphysical incisiveness and his innovating instincts into the field of Skepticism. To him we are indebted for the theory of modified Skepticism which is based upon the acceptance of attainable probability in lieu of professedly unattainable truth. No doubt it is true, as Cicero reminds us, that degrees of knowledge short of absolute certitude had been recognised by philosophers long before the time of Karneades. The principle was indeed involved in elementary ratiocination, and was implied in Skepticism itself, so far as its method claimed to be based on rational procedure. But Karneades first seized hold of and systematized the principle of probabilism; he first endeavoured to discriminate and define successive stages of probability. He called attention for the first time to its relation to absolute truth. He made the important suggestion that, in default of infallible certitude, men might be content to accept imperfect or proximate truth. He therefore adopted a distinctively different standpoint from that of all preceding schools of Free-thought. Not that there was any incongruity between his probability and the Nescience of Sokrates or the Epoché of Pyrrhôn. Karneades disclaimed as fully as any of his brother Skeptics the possibility

of discovering complete truth. His protestations on the subject pass beyond the bound of legitimate doubt into the territory of Negation. But what he did was to seize by means of his metaphysical acuteness the mental process of which definitive Nescience or Epoché were final outcomes. Not a few important discoveries in philosophy and science have been made by neglecting the received products of thought, and directing attention to the processes by which they have been attained, by knowing how to use the discarded and 'waste' products of metaphysical manufacture. This was the mode by which Karneades attained his doctrine of probability. Greek Free-thought had arrived at the results of Nescience and Epoché, but both the personal consciousness of ignorance that Sokrates insisted on, and the more formal suspense of Pyrrhôn, were based upon and presupposed prior inquiry, and a discrimination of degrees and stages of certitude. In the formation of every equipoise of antitheticals, which conditioned definite suspense, the same faculty was implied. No man could affirm, *e.g.* the proposition 20=20 without having a distinct knowledge of numerical values up to the sum of 20, and without being able to determine their relative proportions. There was hence no difference in ultimate principle between Karneades and preceding Skeptics, especially as he agreed with them as to the uselessness of expecting to attain definitive truth.

Moreover, the formal disparity (for such must be allowed to exist) between Karneades's probability and the suspense of preceding Skepticism was diminished by the fact that it was first of all asserted by the Academics as a rule of action, not as a law of speculation. Now, with all their passion for suspense, Skeptics unanimously admitted they must needs act. This necessity was so patent as to be accepted by them as axiomatic. Natural existence involved action. Social life in any human community demanded it. Eccentric as he might be in private thought, the rational Skeptic had no desire to obtrude his peculiarity on his fellow-men. He therefore accepted the customary laws, usages, &c. of those around him, without any distrust or investigation. But such a deference to established laws, customs, &c. was from another standpoint, as I hinted in the case of Arkesilaos, a concession to probability; for these laws and usages were assumed to be regulated by the aggregate experience of the community, to be the final expression of their collective judgments. Thus regarded, probability did not come directly within the scope of the absolute veracity of which the Skeptic despaired. No doubt probability soon became the rule of speculation and discussion as well as of action,

but it was open to its defenders to allege that it was primarily intended as a guide to human practice and conduct.

Setting aside, then, the formal discrepancy between probability and suspense, we must admit that Karneades's teaching was not irreconcilable with the doctrines of preceding Skeptics, while it possessed advantages in the direction of popular acceptation which they did not share. But he was not content merely to assert probability as a standard of action and speculation; he attempted to elaborate the theory by discriminating between different degrees of likelihood. Thus he asserted three degrees of probability, all of which have reference to our perceptions.[1] Thus some perceptions are hardly probable, others are likely and after due reflection may be accepted as deserving belief, others again are inherently probable and of themselves are suggestive of conviction. This is of course but a crude attempt at classification, and is capable inherently of almost indefinite expansion; but it is interesting, as a first attempt to define different degrees of proximate truth, and as the starting-point in a path that has been pursued with varying success by so many other philosophers. You will perceive that in his enunciation of probable knowledge Karneades does not quit the standpoint of idealism whence he attacked the true representatives of the Stoics. Here also his conception of knowledge is subjective knowledge or its approximation, and consists in the union of the subject and object in consciousness. This representation cannot in every case claim to be absolutely true, and as already shown there is no standard by which a true representation may be differentiated from a false. But though we cannot avouch the absolute *truth* of our comprehensible perceptions, we may pronounce judgment on their *vraisemblance*. The probability of Karneades is therefore a compromise between dogmatists and absolute Skeptics. To the former it says: I do not grant your infallible certitudes, I am conscious of no power of attaining them, I possess no standard by which I can judge them, but I concede probability. It is part of my ordinary experience that sensation, ratiocination, as well as the motives of human conduct, are governed by varying degrees of likelihood. I am conscious of choosing instinctively the most probable theory as a solution of a speculative problem, and the most likely course of action in the practical concerns of life. Absolute truth I know not, partial or proximate truth I have no difficulty in apprehending. To the complete Pyrrhonist, on the other hand, it says: Though I agree with you that absolute truth is unattainable, and share your position of Epoché or suspense upon many speculative questions,

[1] Sext. Emp. *Hyp.* i. chap. 33, § 227.

yet it seems to me that probable truth is a fair substitute for the higher kind of veracity of which so many thinkers are enamoured, while it possesses the advantage of being in our power. Besides, it is the ordinary standard of all men in the practical duties of life, and derives from that fact a certain right to regulate our speculation as well. We must, I think, acknowledge that this mediate position of Karneades is open to objection both from the dogmatist and from the extreme Skeptic. The former may urge, as the Stoics actually did, that the power of discriminating degrees of proximate truth presupposed a definite idea of absolute truth, as well as a certain ability to attain it. The difference between absolute and relative truth was at most of degree not of kind, and the faculty capable of attaining the lesser might conceivably reach the greater. There was at least no means of discriminating the highest degree of probability—that which induced immediate and invincible conviction—from absolute truth, so that the difference between them, even granting its existence, was mainly nominal.

More forcible still would be the objection of the extreme Skeptic—with which I also fully sympathize—that by substituting probability for absolute truth Karneades had been guilty, in sporting language, of drawing a red herring across the trail, and so turning aside the energies of truth-seekers to inferior aims. To his highly developed imagination and fastidiously exigeant intellect, no amount of relative or proximate truth could compensate for a deficiency in that absoluteness which he regarded as truth's supremest attribute. As to the propriety of meeting his aspirations by the conditions of terrestrial and human limitations—the main argument for accepting probability in lieu of perfect truth—he would have rejected the proposal with scorn, as an unwarrantable circumscription of his ideal desires and an unworthy sacrifice to ignoble reality. The Skeptic, indeed, shares with the idealist the royal contempt for what is, merely because it is, or rather is conceived to be. If the conditions of actual human existence do not accord with his conception of their ideal perfection, *so much the worse for them.* A thinker of this type is supremely indifferent to all appeals to submit himself to human needs and terrestrial limitations, and laughs to scorn such proverbs as 'Half a loaf is better than no bread.' He would infinitely prefer starvation than the unworthy or partial gratification of his most cherished needs. No mathematician would be satisfied with the proximate solution of a problem as long as he thought a perfect one attainable, and a true idealist refuses to limit the possibility of his attainments, either by his own actual acquirements or by the ordinary experience of his

fellow-men. But notwithstanding objections from either side, few doctrines in the later history of Greek Free-thought had a greater success than the probabilism of Karneades. I do not mean that the Academic Skepticism, of which it was the chief outcome, was more popular than the Stoicism against which it was arraigned. On the contrary, the philosophy of the Porch, with its rigid systematic dogma, its austere morality, its introduction of fixity into every part of human speculation and conduct, was more calculated to enlist the sympathies of ordinary unidea'd men than the apparently lax and doubt-instilling teaching of the Academics. Their unequal popularity resembles, in some measure, the similar relation of Augustinianism to Pelagianism, and of Calvinism to the Free-thought of the sixteenth century. What I mean is that probabilism, as a somewhat lesser degree of Skepticism, was destined to obtain a degree of general concurrence hardly likely to be bestowed upon immovable suspense. This scope of Karneades's doctrine was acknowledged by Sextos Empeirikos himself, who, though insisting on the divergency between probability and pure Skepticism, for the reason that the former postulated a definite standpoint whereas Skeptical suspense was indifferent to all definitive conclusions, yet allowed that probabilism might have a useful sphere of labour in combating moderate dogmatism;[1] it being a maxim of Sextos that the degree of dogma ought to determine the measure of Skepticism employed to oppose it. Nor, although I do not consider probability equal to suspense as a condition of ultimate Skepticism, am I prepared to deny that it may have as a theory of human knowledge much to allege on its behalf. The fact of its being a compromise between dogmatism and suspense, or between Stoics and Pyrrhonists, would be considered by many as an argument in its favour. Confessedly a rule of conduct in many human contingencies, it would thence derive a presumption that it was the highest test of speculation as well, though its effect in the latter direction would be to minimize the range of human ideality and fetter its imagination. In many cases it might perhaps be a stronger incentive to philosophic search than a starting-point of suspense. It may also be made to harmonize very well with the conditions of the universe in relation to human knowledge. Hence I am not surprised that it numbers among its adherents such men as Cicero, Hortensius, Augustine, John of Salisbury, Gassendi, Simon Foucher, and Bishop Butler. And this leads me to make a parting observation on the relation of the new Academy to the general history of Greek Skepticism. If it did not signify an advance in

[1] *Hyp.* book iii. chap. 32. Comp. book i. chap. 33.

the direction of pure Skepticism, *i.e.* that of Pyrrhonic Epoché, it was in that of the comprehensiveness and variety of Free-thought in general. It introduced a greater elaboration and versatility into the whole subject. It defined a new type and limit of mental freedom. It posed the human instincts for search and inquiry in a new attitude. It formulated truth in a novel manner, many would say, one more in harmony with man's actual position in the world, and his relation to the problems by which he was surrounded. It possessed the acceptability usually accorded to a compromise by reasonable and candid controversialists. It traded, moreover, with the hallowed names of Sokrates and Plato—typical Skeptic and Idealist —for it is certain that among the new Academics there was always a diffusion not only of Sokratic Nescience and Eristic, but of Platonic dogmas as well, though to what extent we cannot say. It established a school of philosophy, with its own distinctive characteristics both of method and tenet, between the Skepticism of Pyrrhôn and the extreme Idealism of the pure Platonists, and so far was a visible embodiment of the truth so soon recognised in the history of Greek Free-thought that Idealism is closely related to Skepticism, both as cause and effect. It contributed by its stress on probability to found an influential school of Eclecticism. Thus it enlarged the sphere of intellectual mobility by promoting its range through several nominally disparate but really correlated systems of thought. We cannot, therefore, be surprised to find that the influence of the new Academy extended to the whole remaining period of Greek and Græco-Roman speculation, and that it is found exercising, and in some instances moulding, the intellects of great thinkers even down to the fourth century after the Christian era.

Ainesidemos.

The tendency of the later development of the new Academics was clearly to induce, if not hostility, yet indifference to the Pyrrhonic standpoint of suspense. While agreeing in theory that absolute truth is indiscoverable, Karneades suggested an acceptance of partial or imperfect truth. But it was against this final acceptation that Skepticism protested. A semi-truth might not press so heavily on the free instincts of the inquirer as a complete, fully avouched dogma, still it was itself dogmatic. Nay, if asserted as the only possible outcome of all human search, probability became as dogmatic as any other extreme assertion of finality. It is not, therefore, surprising to find that the mingled

outgrowths of the new Academy, consisting of Idealism, Eclecticism, and Skepticism, were opposed by a new assertion of the Pyrrhonic standpoint. The originator of this reactionary movement is said to have been a certain Ptolemy of Cyrene, but its chief exponent for us is Ainesidemos.

Our knowledge of this writer is just as incomplete and uncertain as our information concerning his brother Skeptics. He was born at Gnossus, and taught philosophy at Alexandria. Of the time when he lived nothing definite is known, but he was not improbably a contemporary of Cicero. Unlike most of his predecessors, Ainesidemos left behind him some written works. Of these the best known is his 'Pyrrhonian Discourses,' of which a fragment preserved for us by Photius [1] gives a summary of its contents. Its purpose, we are told, was to point out that Skeptics were no more than other thinkers able to obtain truth, but were distinguished from them by deliberately foregoing such an unattainable object. The Skeptic did not wish to know what was unknowable, and in that acquiescence in the inevitable consisted his superior wisdom. The first book of the Discourses was devoted to a discrimination of the Academic and Pyrrhonic Skepticism. It insisted on the complete suspense of the earlier school, and demanded an equal abstention from negation and affirmation as a primary condition of true Skepticism. The Skeptic knew nothing dogmatically of truth or falsehood, credible or incredible, being or not-being, whereas the Academic expressed himself in terms of assurance of many things, speaking of virtue, truth and falsehood, the probable and improbable, &c. The second book began the exposition of Skepticism in detail, treating of truths, of causes, of passions and affections, of becoming and vanishing, &c. The third discussed motion, sensuous perceptions, and their characteristics. The fourth treated of mental representations, and included the false ideas current respecting the world and the nature of the gods The fifth expounded the invalidity of the principle of causation. The sixth considered the ideas of good and evil, or things to be chosen and avoided. The seventh treated of the virtues. The eighth, of final causes.

The work, of which this abstract of contents is hardly more than the skeleton of a skeleton, was evidently a methodical and somewhat elaborate treatise—the first of which we have any definite account in the history of Greek Skepticism. It would be exceedingly rash to try to fill up these meagre outlines by a

[1] *Biblioth.* Ed. Bekker, pp. 169, 170.

detailed exposition, as a French critic has done.[1] But we may, at least, gather from them its general purport. We may at any rate infer that it was intended as a defence of the main doctrines of Pyrrhonism. There was, according to Ainesidemos, no criterion of truth beyond the relative one of subjective phenomena. On all subjects of knowledge, *i.e.* generally regarded as such, the inquirer could not go beyond a cautious non-affirmation. I have already acknowledged that on this point we must probably ascribe to Ainesidemos the developed forms of the Ten Tropoi, or modes of suspense, which are the most celebrated formulæ of Greek Skepticism. This will therefore be a fitting place to record them as they are presented to us by Sextos Empeirikos.[2]

I. The first of these modes is derived from the difference observable in the various physical organizations of animals. For it seems probable that the variety of conformation of organs of senses will imply a diversity in their functions, and thus in the knowledge they acquire. This theory is borne out by the fact that derangements in our own organs affect their deliverances. A man in the jaundice, *e.g.* sees things yellow which a man with healthy vision discerns to be white. A man with bloodshot eyes, again, perceives white objects as red. Now amongst animals there are eyes of many different colours: we may, then, infer that their perception of colours will vary accordingly. Besides, a concave mirror makes outward objects seem smaller than they really are, and a convex renders them longer and narrower. But we find the eyes of animals variously shaped: in some cases they protrude, in others they are sunken; in some they are round, in others long. Hence it is likely that the images of outward objects which they receive are different on this account, and that dogs, fish, lions, men, and grasshoppers do not see the same objects as equal in size or alike in form. This diversity in the visual power of different animals is seen in the case of those birds and quadrupeds which hunt their prey at night, the eye in such cases being differently shaped from the organs of animals that use the daylight. Again, we all know how the flavour of food is affected by the state of the body and the sense of taste. This difference in taste-perception we may assume to extend itself to the whole animal kingdom, for we see how all animals are diversely generated and constituted,

[1] M. Saisset in his work *Le Scepticisme—Ænésidème—Pascal—Kant.* 2nd edition, Paris, 1865.

[2] *Hypotyposes*, book i. chap. xiv. English readers may find a full account of them in Mr. Levin's *Lectures*, p. 44, &c., or in the English translation of Zeller, *The Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics*, published by Messrs. Longmans.

fed on dissimilar food, manifesting different habits, &c. Nor does the uniformity of an outward object necessarily imply an uniformity of internal effect. The same food, *e.g*, when taken is transformed into a vein in one place, an artery in another, to a bone or a nerve, according to the receptivity of the various portions of the organism. So the same water given to a plant becomes bark or leaves or fruit.

In connection with this first mode we have those speculations common to ancient and modern Skeptics of the community of faculty between man and the lower orders of creation. According to Ainesidemos, there is not the impassable gulf commonly alleged to exist between man as rational and other creatures as irrational animals. As regards ordinary senses, dogs and other animals far exceed man. Nor in reason are they inferior; for dividing reason into the internal faculty and its outward expression, a dog in reality possesses both the one and the other, and is therefore a perfect animal. The extent of canine sagacity is proved by the instance of Argos, the dog of Odysseus, which recognised his master when none of his human friends and dependants were able to do so. Dogs are, moreover, capable of syllogistic reasoning, and can apply for themselves the law of excluded middle, for when hunting a dog comes to a point where three roads meet, after failing to find scent on two of them he rushes down the third without much preliminary scrutiny. Nor, again, is the dog without moral virtue, for he certainly possesses some ethical attributes, as affection, generosity, &c.; and we are assured by Chrysippos that the virtues are so intimately allied that he who possesses one possesses all. As to the alleged non-possession by dogs and other brutes of the faculty of expressing reason, this may be ascribed to our own ignorance of brute language. Certainly we find that dogs and other animals have a power of communicating their wishes and feelings to each other.

II. As the first mode refers to man as part of the animal creation, considering divergences of knowledge as the lot of all sentient beings, so the second refers to man himself, and discusses the variety that exists in the human constitution. Man has a twofold nature, physical and intellectual. Now the differences between men in respect of the former are obvious: men's bodies are different in shape, size, colour, constitution, temperature; and analogy would seem to indicate that the same differences exist in respect of men's minds. This presumption of analogy is confirmed by our actual experience. We recognise mental disparities of all kinds and degrees. Indeed, the endless variety of human desires

and aversions has been a favourite subject with poets in all ages. As a result, we have the fact that similar things affect men in very dissimilar manners, and this of itself is quite enough to warrant a suspense of judgment as to any general conclusion or truth derivable from either the physical sensations or mental conclusions of men. All truth must necessarily be individual, no man having a right to predicate more than his own subjective impression on any matter.

III. The next mode refers to a possible discrepancy in sense-deliverances. Each organ of sense indicates a separate quality of an external object. They are not five witnesses testifying to the same fact, but to different facts, each one of them independent of the rest. An apple, *e.g.* appears to create different impressions on the eye, the nose, the palate, the touch. These impressions we commonly take for separable objective facts, but for anything we know they may be only subjective varieties of one and the same fact. Nor can we assert either in this or in any similar case that our bodily senses exhaust all the real qualities of any external object. Our knowledge is so limited by the senses we possess that their diminution involves immediately an impaired or imperfect cognition. A deaf or blind man must always possess but a partial and misleading knowledge. Further, the senses do not only differ in the information they convey, like separate witnesses of independent facts, but they frequently seem to contradict each other. Examples of this adduced by Sextos are the divergent aspects of a picture to sight and touch, of honey to taste and sight, of perfumes to smell and taste, &c. But if our senses differ thus among themselves, and are not all in the same story, we cannot rely on their evidence; and if we are unable to believe them, we cannot depend on our reason as a judge of external things, because it derives all its materials for judgment from the senses.

IV. The fourth mode relates to differences in our subjective conditions, and their effect in modifying our knowledge of external things. Among such divergent states are sleeping and waking, youth and age, motion and rest, hunger and fulness, hatred and love, grief and joy. That these contrasted conditions involve a proportionate difference in the knowledge obtained in them, no one would deny. But according to Sextos there is no demonstrable proof that any of these is superior to the rest as a condition for receiving knowledge. Such infallible knowledge can only be maintained by a certain criterion of truth; but this, from the nature of the case, is not obtainable.

V. The fifth mode depends on the difference of position, inter-

vals, circumstances of all external objects, every single object in our environment being affected in our perceptions by other objects inseparable from it. Thus the same colonnade surveyed from either end or from the middle presents a very different appearance. The same object seems great or small according to its proximity to or distance from the observer. The same tower looks round or square according to the position of the spectator. The light of the same lamp varies greatly as it shines by day or by night. An oar in the water seems broken, &c. Hence all that we can say of outward objects is, that they seem to us to have such an appearance at such a distance or under certain given circumstances. We cannot affirm what their absolute independent character is when quite apart from our own perceptions. We cannot even say that they have any such character or separable existence.

VI. The sixth mode carries to a still further extent the complicated nature of all outward objects. We see nothing, *e.g.* absolutely by itself, but in certain media, as air, light, moisture, cold, or heat. These media, being extrinsic to the object, affect our perception of it. Thus colour presents a different appearance in warm and cold air, perfumes have unequal powers in heat, as, *e.g.* in a bath, and in cold air. The same body weighs differently in different media, as, *e.g.* in air and in water, &c. Here again our attempted knowledge of the real properties of external objects is frustrated by the impossibility of detaching them from the environment in which they are necessarily presented to us; and if our senses are thus deceived, our intellect, relying on the judgment of the senses, must needs be deceived as well.

VII. The seventh mode has reference to quantities, the relation of parts to wholes, the chemical or other internal constitution of any object. Thus the scrapings of goats' horn by themselves seem white, but in the horn are black; silver filings by themselves are black, as silver are white. We are, moreover, affected by diverse proportions of ingredients in any given object. Thus a chemist finds that a given combination of drugs produces on its human recipient a beneficial effect, whereas a slight modification in the proportions will produce a deleterious effect, nay, will convert a medicine into a poison. Food and drink must also be taken in definite quantities to insure bodily health; if these quantities are departed from, the result is not health, but disease. If there is this diversity in the relation of parts to wholes, it is evident we can predicate nothing dogmatically either of one or the other.

VIII. The eighth mode, as has often been remarked, is a summary of all the preceding seven. It affirms the relativity

of all existing things considered as objects of knowledge, and is therefore only a reassertion of the canon of Protagoras, 'Man is the measure of all things.' Sextos, probably copying Ainesidemos, discriminates two kinds of relativity, subjective and objective, or the relation of things to us and their relation to each other. The first and only one of which we can have any cognizance has been discussed in the preceding modes, with the general result that we are unable to transcend our percipient faculties, or to attain any idea of the nature of things in themselves, all we can know being their phenomenal aspect to us at a given time and under given conditions.

IX. The ninth mode investigates the relations of human knowledge in respect of time. The impressions we receive from outward objects vary in intensity and value, in proportion to their rarity or frequency. The sun by itself is a much more wonderful object than a comet, but because we see it daily we regard it as a natural object, whereas a comet seen rarely is considered by many a supernatural object and a portent of coming calamity. So also the reason why gold is valued is because of its rarity. If it were as common as flint, we should regard it with equal indifference. Thus time too presents itself as a disturbing influence in our knowledge of things; and as it is a perpetual concomitant of all our knowledge, it renders its perfection a still greater impossibility.

X. The last mode refers to the variety pertaining to human institutions, customs, laws, superstitions, and dogmatic opinions. All these are shown to depend on human agreement, conventions, usages, and therefore vary indefinitely not only among nations and races, but among classes in the same nation, among sects of philosophers, and even among individuals. Hence all these laws and institutions possess only a relative significance; they are not absolute rules binding on the whole of humanity.

It seems not unlikely that these ten modes, which probably formed part of Ainesidemos's fifth book of the 'Pyrrhonian Discourses,' were first intended as a Skeptical rejoinder to the ten categories of Aristotle,[1] as if in opposition to ten forms of knowledge Skeptics had devised ten of Nescience. But the number seems to have varied after the death of Ainesidemos. Agrippa, *e.g.* reduced them to five. Others again to two, viz.:

Everything is comprehended either (i.) by itself, or (ii.) by something else. But (i.) is impossible, for nothing can be comprehended by itself, because we lack both sensuous and intellectual instruments of demonstration; nor (ii.) by anything else, since that also must be proved by something else, and so *ad infinitum*. But

[1] This is suggested by Dr. Tafel in his *Gesch. und Kritik. der Skept.* p. 81.

in reality the ten modes, as already remarked, turn on the one ultimate fact of the relativity of our knowledge. They all tend to throw doubt on positive or general knowledge. They appeal to consciousness for a disproof of absolute externality. Hence they are weapons which have been employed by Idealists as well as Skeptics, they are wielded by Malebranche, Berkeley, and Kant as well as by Sextos Empeirikos, Montaigne, and Descartes; indeed, they are inevitable to every attempt to grasp real knowledge—truth which shall be inherently and absolutely perfect, knowledge which shall be altogether independent of the restrictions, fluctuations, and imperfections of the individual knower.

But besides this elaborated form of the ten modes or reasons for suspense, the name of Ainesidemos is associated with other Skeptical reasonings. Tradition represents him as the author of the celebrated argument against causation, probably contained in the fifth book of the 'Pyrrhonian Discourses.' According to Ainesidemos there were eight modes in which causation might be wrongly predicated. 1. When the cause assigned is not in the category of things known or evident. 2. When one cause is arbitrarily selected out of many possible ones. 3. When of things that happen in order, disorderly and dissimilar causes are assigned. 4. When men judge of non-phenomenal objects by what they know of phenomenal. 5. When various adequate causes are assigned for the same effect. 6. When favourable or plausible causes are insisted on while unfavourable ones are ignored. 7. When causes are proposed conflicting both with phenomena and among themselves. 8. When both the apparent phenomena and the causes assigned for them being equally doubtful, men reason from one to the other.[1] We might suppose from this indictment of wrong causes that Ainesidemos has a true theory of causation to substitute for them. That, however, is not the case; he denies the validity of all reasoning from causation. Sextos Empeirikos reports his argument on the subject in two places: (1) In an abbreviated form in his *Hypotyposes*, and (2) in a very elaborate form in the seventh book of his *Adversus Mathematicos*. A glance at the former will serve our present purpose.[2] We thence learn that causes are, according to the opinions of philosophers, of various kinds: some maintain they are material, others say they are immaterial; most define cause as that on account of the energy of which the effect

[1] Readers of Mill's *Logic* will not need to be told that most of these illicit causations are met with and discussed in his enumeration of fallacies.

[2] *Hyp.* book iii. chap. ii Compare Saisset's *Scepticism*, pp. 133-203.

takes place. *E.g.* the sun or heat is said to be the cause of wax melting. But here again thinkers differ; for while some say heat causes the result, others assert it causes the process. Further, causes are subdivided among themselves; some of them contain the effect in themselves, others are co-operative or con-causes, others again are merely contributory and subordinate. Now the existence of cause must be admitted as a probability, indeed causation of some kind is demanded by the laws and order of the universe, and yet the difficulties in its conception and definition are insuperable. Thus cause postulates a relation to effect not transitory and accidental, but inherent and inevitable. Hence we cannot imagine a cause before we comprehend its effect *as such*, and it is equally impossible to conceive an effect *as such* before we know the cause. We are therefore involved in a double perplexity, for a complete absolute knowledge not merely of the causal nexus but of cause and effect as separable knowable things is clearly impossible. Nor is the matter mended if we assume or imagine a cause hypothetically, for if a man does this not having cause he is unworthy of credit, but if he has a cause it is a cause prior to the assigned cause, which hence becomes a mere *petitio principii*. Moreover, in every affirmation of a cause it is necessary for the acquisition of that complete knowledge which every truth-seeker desires, to demand the cause of that cause, and again the cause of the antecedent cause, and thus he is started in an infinite regress of causation. Again, cause produces its effect as being a cause or not; but the latter is impossible, and the former demands a knowledge of its prior existence, which is not attainable. Once more, cause must coexist with its related effect or before or after, but it cannot exist after, for this would be absurd; nor before, for it is related to the effect which must then be held to exist, at least in the intellect: nor, again, can it coexist, for if it is effective of that which afterwards comes into being there must be a prior cause of that effect. Lastly, we cannot imagine anything prior to that before which we can imagine nothing, and for this reason, too, we cannot imagine a cause. These arguments against the possibility of causation are found in a much more elaborate form elsewhere, but these will suffice for our purpose. You will see that we are here confronted with the same dilemma which in the opinion of Ainesidemos reduces all human knowledge to a state of suspense; we have here again the perennial conflict between the superficial deliverances of the senses and the profounder investigations of the reason and the imagination, between the relative and the absolute. Indeed Ainesidemos's polemic against causation might have been inferred from his warfare against all knowledge, for our inability

to comprehend the relation of cause and effect is but a corollary from our ignorance of external existence of every kind. Hence our knowledge of a causal relation must be like our knowledge of all other things, purely phenomenal, and all that we thereby know of cause and effect is that they are sequences or successive appearances—in the words of Hume, 'they seem *conjoined* but never *connected*.'[1] No doubt we are at liberty to assume that cause and effect may have, irrespectively of any relation to us, and in countlessly diverse manners, an objective, inherent, and inseparable conjunction, but what such a relation is we are no more able to comprehend than we are any other knowledge which is absolutely independent of and aloof from our cognitive faculties.

We have no time to discuss the interesting question of the effect of this ratiocination on modern philosophers. 'It is no small merit,' says M. Saisset, 'in Ainesidemos to have prepared the way for Hume and Kant; he did even more than that, for the basis of the argumentation of these great thinkers may be found by careful analysis in Ainesidemos.[2] But even this second and fuller concession seems to me to understate the obligations of Hume and Kant to the writings of the later Greek Skeptics. Not only is it that we have the basis of Hume's thought in the causation theory of Ainesidemos as recorded by Sextos, but we have the thought itself expressed as clearly and as fully as in Hume's 'Treatise on Human Nature' or his Essays, and I have not the slightest doubt that, together with the reactionary impulse the Scotch thinker derived from the philosophies of Locke and Berkeley, his theory of causation was really derived from the Greek Skeptics. Nor is this by any means the only unacknowledged debt which a comparison of Hume's works with those of Sextos enables us to pay back to the original owner.

But there is a noteworthy feature in Ainesidemos's thought that remains to be considered, and that is his intimate relation to Herakleitos. There seems indeed in these later ages of Greek speculation to have been a 'run,' if I may use the term, upon its earlier representatives. Pythagoras comes again into the foreground. Eleatic metaphysics are studied, Pyrrhôn bases his freethought in part on Demokritos. Ainesidemos is represented not only as a disciple, but an earnest propagator of the Herakleitean

[1] *Essays*, edition Green and Grose, vol. ii. p. 61. It may be here noted that M. Saisset, with every inclination to side with Dogmatists against Skeptics, is compelled to admit the inexplicability of causation as ultimate truth. Comp. his work above quoted, pp. 165 and 193.

[2] Page 135.

philosophy. At first sight the connexion between Pyrrhonic suspense and the perpetual flux of Herakleitos does not seem very obvious. Sextos regards the latter theory of the universe as dogmatic, and therefore inadmissible from a Skeptical point of view; and apart from his possible bias, it must be granted that they seem to be rather independent and parallel lines of Free-thought than to be identical with each other, or even to be related as cause and effect, But a little reflection will serve to show us that a transition from Pyrrhonism to Herakleiteanism is not so unreasonable as it appears. If we remember that continual search is as much a part of Pyrrhonic thought as actual suspense, we shall perceive that the latter is by no means a state of immobility: the antitheticals which constitute the conditions of suspense are perpetually changing their character and form, so that opposites tend to pass over each into the other, or else to converge in an identity which in its turn becomes divisible into further antinomies. Thus a course of perpetual but fluctuating Epoché, combined with a persistently forward movement of investigation, would produce a mental condition similar to the flux of the Tenebrous thinker, and of itself not unlikely to engender it. Assuming this to have been Ainesidemos's mode of transition from Pyrrhonism to Herakleiteanism, we may explain the frequent ascription to him of the more dogmatic opinions of Herakleitos. They may easily have been, as Sextos Empeirikos generally designates them, the utterances of his disciples, who may have misconceived the extent of their master's adhesion to the earlier thinker; they are clearly irreconcilable with our best accredited knowledge of his own Skeptical standpoint. But so far from his final reception of the flux of Herakleitos, and the consequently illusory nature of all material things, being improbable, Ainesidemos is only one out of many examples of a progress from Skepticism to Idealism. When we come to Hindu thinkers at our next meeting we shall find more than one school which, starting from the incertitude of all things, have ended in the belief that the world of phenomenon is only an elaborate but deceptive and unreal vision.

Closing our remarks on Ainesidemos, we must admit that he was a thinker of considerable power, though his influence as a leader of Skeptical thought has been exaggerated by modern philosophers.[1]

He certainly is not what M. Saisset terms him, 'le premier skeptique de l'antiquité.' That high designation must in my opinion

[1] Especially by M. Saisset. See on this subject Dr. Haas's work above mentioned, p. 52.

be divided among Sokrates, Pyrrhôn, and Sextos Empeirikos. Nor does it appear that his influence as a Skeptical thinker was very widely diffused, for it is a noteworthy fact that Seneca does not once mention him, though it is true that this omission might be explained by what I consider a strong probability, that the school of Ainesidemos was regarded after his death as distinctly Herakleitean and dogmatic. He does not, therefore, deserve that position of typical Skeptic which he occupies in certain histories of philosophy and in other works (*e.g.* Schulze's well-known attack on the Kantian philosophy). His chief importance lies for us in his being the first organizer of Pyrrhonic speculation. His discourses brought together and systematized the ratiocination most in use in the Skeptical schools of his time. He is thus a precursor of a still greater thinker, who closes for us the illustrious roll of Greek Skeptics. I refer to Sextos Empeirikos.

Sextos Empeirikos.

All systems of thought have their periods of growth, maturity, and decay, or, as it might be better expressed, their stages of seed-time, summer growth, and harvest ripeness, and Greek Skepticism is no exception to the rule. Born in the profound speculations of the Eleatics, nourished by Herakleitos, Demokritos, and the Sophists, attaining its full growth in Sokrates, passing into further stages of ripeness among Pyrrhonists and Academics, its harvest is finally gathered by Sextos Empeirikos. Few systems of thought stretching over the space of seven centuries can boast an evolution so natural and so decisively marked in its varied stages; fewer still have a history so fully recorded, and a method so well systematized, as the Skepticism embodied in the works of Sextos.

This writer, who so worthily closes the roll of Greek Skeptics, seems to have flourished about the beginning of the third century of the Christian era. Nothing reliable is known of his native place. He is said to have been a disciple of a certain Herodotus of Tarsus, who was himself a pupil of Menodotus of Nicomedia. Both of these were medical empirics, in the then honourable meaning of the phrase, as preferring to be guided by experience and observation rather than by dogma and routine. Almost the only known facts concerning Sextos are that he was, as his name denotes, a medical empiric, and that he was the author of certain medical works. These have now shared the oblivion in which his personal history is buried. The only works remaining to us are those in which he treats of Greek Skepticism, viz.:

1. The Pyrrhonian Institutions (*Hypotoposes*).
2. His work against the Mathematicians.

These are the most remarkable products of the final stage of Hellenic Free-thought, to which they bear the same relation as the Platonic 'Dialogues of Search' to its early maturity, and the philosophical writings of Cicero to its middle or Academic period. From his point of vantage, at the close of Greek thought Sextos passes in review its whole magnificent progress, from its crude commencement with the physical theories of the Ionian philosophers until his own day. The whole panorama of the greatest and fullest thought of the world is unfolded before him. He watches the origin, growth, and decay of schools and systems of philosophy, destined, though he knew it not, to animate men of diverse cultures and far-off times and countries. Especially from his standpoint of an all-devouring Skepticism does he observe their decay. His progress resembles that of a man who examines the ruined palaces and temples of some gigantic city of antiquity. Here stood, he might have said, the rude but magnificent palace of Homer. Yonder shapeless mound represents all that is left of the earliest temple of the Ionian physicists. Hard by, built of lighter materials, is the ruin that marks the spot where the airy superstructure of the Eleatics stood. Those formless heaps were at one time the site of the world-famed labyrinth of the Sophists. Close by, a pile of great magnificence, still preserving the outlines of its ancient form on account of the massive materials of which it was built, was the temple of Sokrates. That well-preserved fane next adjoining—almost forming part—of the Sokratic edifice, is the Hellenic cathedral, planned and built by Plato, and distinguished by its bold outline and its lofty elevation, destined to become in after-times the abode of a philosophy and the shrine of a religion. Next in order comes the enormous fabric reared by the mighty intellect of Aristotle, not so compactly designed nor rising to such a sublime height as the temple of Plato, but nevertheless at one time a noble building and covering an immense extent of ground. While last in order come the remains of the gymnastic grounds of the Academics, the pleasure gardens of the Epikoureans, the grim and narrow porch of the Stoics. Nor would he have exempted his own chosen philosophy from the imaginary destruction in which he contemplated all schemes of Hellenic thought. It was in his view a cherished attribute of complete Skepticism that its destructive properties were equally manifested towards itself. He compared its operation to the effect of some drastic medicine, which, eliminating from the system

noxious matters, included itself in the process, or to a fire which devoured itself as well as the combustible matter it fed on. Thus all Greek thought-schemes were regarded by him as victims of the deadly prowess of Skepticism, which in turn committed intellectual suicide.

But the conception of Skepticism as fatal to all Greek philosophy implied a knowledge of its various systems, and that not merely as related to itself as objects of an unsparing polemic, but inherently as the diversiform results of a many-sided speculation. Intellectual candour is indeed a conspicuous quality of all the leading Skeptics of Greece. Opposed to all dogmatic systems as they necessarily were, they still tacitly acknowledged those systems as the products of human ratiocination, however in most cases misapplied. Hence they studied them with the assiduity of disciples determined to understand, and the zeal of controversialists minded if possible to overthrow, them. Sextos appears to have been an especial proficient in Greek philosophy, and his works contain in an irregular, desultory form a fair synopsis of its contents. Indeed, had every other work on Greek philosophy perished, we should still be able to reconstruct the thought-schemes of its foremost thinkers from the fragments, allusions, and ratiocinations contained in his works. As it is, not a few prominent Hellenic thinkers owe the place they occupy in histories of philosophy to the notice bestowed on them by Sextos.

For us, however, the significance of Sextos's works does not consist in their bearing on the whole of Greek philosophy, but only on its Free-thought. Of that they form an admirable conspectus. The first of them—the Pyrrhonian Institutions—co-ordinates and systematizes the most approved methods of Greek Skepticism; in the words of M. Saisset, it is 'a precise and complete résumé of the whole of ancient Skepticism.'[1] The second—the treatise 'against the mathematicians,' or the *learners* of dogmatic systems —is more polemical than expository. It is an attack directed against all who profess to have positive knowledge or methods of knowledge. Thus it assails grammarians, rhetoricians, geometricians, arithmeticians, astrologers, musicians, logicians, physicists, and ethical philosophers, and in every case proves, or professes to prove, that their methods and tenets are alike unreliable when tested by a thorough-going and imaginative Dialectic. For obvious reasons we must confine our attention to the former work, employing the latter only occasionally for purposes of confirmation or explication.

[1] Art. 'Sextus' in the *Dict. Sci. Phil.*

Sextos begins his 'Pyrrhonian principles' by a division of philosophers or searchers for truth into the three classes, Dogmatic, Academic, and Skeptic. Of these the first declare they have found truth, the second say they cannot find it, and the third, without any positive declaration on the point, continue their search. But how, it might be asked, is this indifference-point of the searchers or Skeptics to be attained? Sextos tells us, in the definition of Skepticism which we have agreed to accept as our own guide in considering the subject. It consists in placing in mental opposition, and in every conceivable mode, the contradictions of the senses and of the intellect. This opposition is based on and justified by the equal validity of such antitheses. It has a twofold operation: it induces first a suspense of judgment, and next Ataraxia or philosophic calm. But no sooner has Sextos thus defined his subject-matter in terms which seem to make all modes of knowledge to be states of equipoise or indifference than he is confronted by another necessity, viz. he must show that the existence of Skepticism itself as a distinctive creed is not imperilled by its own definition. He has thus to answer the question, Does a Skeptic choose a sect? His answer is as follows:[1] 'If one understands by the choice of a sect the adhesion to certain dogmas connected among themselves and with phenomena, the Skeptic is of no sect, for every dogma is an assertion on a debatable subject, and this a Skeptic altogether refuses. But if one applies the term sect to a certain scheme in accordance with phenomena, such scheme teaching us how we may live rightly (*i.e.* in conformity with ordinary usage), and also inciting us to suspend our judgment, then we say that we have a sect, for we pursue a certain plan which, as appears to us, shows us how to live conformably with our country's customs, laws, and institutions, as well as with our own individual feelings. We hence perceive that Skeptics acknowledged themselves bound by social restraints of all kinds so far as these could plead the sanction of the community or country to which they belonged. But there was a further limitation. As an individual, the Skeptic admitted himself to be bound by phenomena. Sextos confesses this in answer to the objection most frequently urged against his principles, that Skeptics destroy phenomena. He says:[2] 'We do not overturn those things which, being perceived by our senses, compel us to assent against our will, for these are phenomena. But when we inquire whether such a thing is in reality what it appears (the appearance we concede), our search is in truth not of the phenomenon but of that which is predicated of the phenomenon. And this is different from investi-

[1] *Hyp.* book i. chap. viii. [2] *Ibid.* book i chap. x.

gation concerning the phenomenon itself. For example, honey appears to us sweet. In that we are all agreed, for we are all affected by its sweetness. What we are doubtful about is whether it is sweet in reason (or absolutely), and this is not the phenomenon itself but what is reported concerning it. When, therefore, we openly attack arguments about phenomena, we do it not as wishing to destroy phenomena but in order to repress the temerity of dogmatists. For if the reason be so deceptive as to steal away the very deliverances of our eyesight, how much should we not suspect it in things less manifest, so as to avoid being led by it into error!' These statements of the end and method of Skepticism are of the highest importance. Sextos seems to have placed them in the forefront of his treatise for a twofold purpose—(1) to calm the fears of those who might suppose that a mode of thought so indifferent to all fixed principles must needs be subversive of morality and of all social well-being; (2) to quiet the alarm of those who thought they saw in the Skeptical treatment of sense-deliverances—the basis of all human knowledge—the annihilation of all thought. Sextos assures his hearers that both these apprehensions are unfounded. The Skeptic receives the accepted facts of social and national life, the beliefs, laws, and customs of his fellow-citizens, with deference. They are social phenomena, and he accepts them with the same submissiveness as he does the intellectual phenomena of his sense-deliverances. As to the accusation of destroying phenomena, the Skeptic in his first formal acceptation of them has no quarrel with the dogmatist. It is about the transcendental realities conceivably underlying all objects of knowledge that his mind is exercised. He does not dispute the sweetness of honey as an affection of his own palate, but he wants to know how far the same sweetness is an absolute inherent quality of honey, how far it is necessarily sweet to all creatures gifted with the sense of taste, how far it is conditioned by the state of the palate itself (for the Greek Skeptics believed that in certain conditions of the palate honey was bitter), and how far by its own intrinsic qualities; and, if the sweetness were to be divided between the subject and object, what were the conditions and proportions of this division—in a word, his effort is, as we shall see more largely further on, to penetrate below appearances, to get if possible at the unconditioned, the absolute, as an indispensable condition of infallible and universal truth, and in contradistinction to the mutabilities he discerns in ordinary phenomena.

Phenomena therefore constituted the Skeptic's criterion of ordinary life. They represented the point where his principles came

into conflict with the common prepossessions of mankind. The whole question of Dogmatism *v.* Skepticism turned on phenomena. Was it required to distinguish a Dogmatist from a Skeptic, one had only to ask, What does he think of phenomena? Do they represent to him complete and definitive realities? Does he believe that the objects of his senses, the conceptions of his reason, are final truths? or, conceding their unreality and transitoriness as mere concomitants of his personality, does he endeavour to search further? Knowing the fallible and evanescent character both of his sensuous and intellectual perceptions, does he employ his best efforts to attain to permanent, absolute truth, independent of himself and his faculties? If that be the object of his untiring quest, he is a Skeptic. On the other hand, if he acquiesces in phenomena, if he takes his knowledge and experience as infallible truth, if he exalts himself to the position of omniscience, and regards his limitations as equivalent to infinity, he is a Dogmatist.

But the consistent Skeptic thus defined will also acquire indirectly a very desirable issue of his search. For suppose he should never attain to absolute truth, to the existence in reason (to use Sextos's phrase) of those things he discerns as appearances, is his search therefore fruitless? No, answers Sextos, his inquiry incidentally induces Ataraxia or philosophic calm. Carefully equipoising the phenomenal and intellectual antitheses that come before him, he attains the condition of placid serenity, which, besides being favourable to further Skeptical effort, is also the highest altitude of human aspiration. Final attainment of truth was a condition not contemplated among the contingencies of Skepticism, nor indeed was it desiderated. It postulated the state against which Skeptical search was a perpetual protest, viz. dogmatic assertion. Besides which, in making absolute truth their goal, Skeptics had placed the ultimate outcome of their effort far beyond the limits of human ability. Like religionists of most creeds, their summit of excellence, however conceivable in imagination, was confessedly beyond their real power. They themselves regarded it rather as the motive and guide of their energy than its attainable consummation. With a somewhat modified rendering they might have applied to themselves the words of St. Paul—words indeed applicable to every pursuit of high ideals—'not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended. . . . Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but one thing I do, leaving the things behind, and straining forward to the things before, I press onward towards the mark,' &c.

Having thus laid down in his early chapters the main lines and scope of his subject, Sextos enters upon a critical examination of those prior systems of Greek thought which seem to have greatest affinity with Skepticism, and which we have already examined. In most of them Sextos recognises approximations to Skepticism, but finds them defective as adequate exponents of its principles. Either they have not grasped fully the position of suspense, or they have made some other aim than Ataraxia the object of their search, or notwithstanding their Skeptical leanings have contrived to intermingle with their teachings some positive dogmas; or for some other reason he rejects them all as claimants to pure Pyrrhonic Skepticism. The Herakleitean philosophy, *e.g.* is imperfectly Skeptical because it professes certain dogmas. Its eternal flux is dogmatic; so is its principle, that contrarieties inhere in the same thing, and its notion of a final conflagration of the world. The school of Demokritos, again, by its denial of the absolute existence of qualities, manifests Skeptical tendencies, and it borrows Skeptical formulæ; but inasmuch as it affirms certain things respecting atoms and the vacuum, it is only partly Skeptical. The Kyrenaics resemble the Pyrrhonists so far that they maintain that only sensations can be comprehended, but then they make pleasure the aim of their philosophy instead of Ataraxia. The maxim of Protagoras—'Man is the measure of all things'—is admitted to be quite Pyrrhonic; but this concession to Skepticism is neutralized by the positive dogmas of that thinker; *e.g.* his belief in the flux of Herakleitos. The Academics from Plato downwards have clearly Skeptical sympathies, but these are adulterated by certain dogmatic teachings. The Probabilism of Karneades, to take an instance, was not purely Skeptical, for it was a predetermination to a certain standpoint of thought, and it admitted degrees of likelihood among phantasiæ or mental representations which to the Skeptic were all alike. It is amusing to watch the excessive jealousy of Sextos as regards the admission of other thinkers to the sacred inner circle of Skepticism. Not only must they adopt the same directions of thought, but they must arrive at the same conclusions expressed in the same formulæ. No dogmatic religionist could be more careful of the orthodox pronunciation of his shibboleth than Sextos is of the two main articles of the Skeptics' creed. Indeed, he overshoots the mark, because a rigid application of his rule would exclude Pyrrhonism itself from the category of pure Skepticism. For it is clear that Suspense is as much a predetermination to a certain method of thought as any that could be named, while the perpetual appeal to Ataraxia and its accurate

definition are opposed to a philosophy that makes non-definition the chief principle in its method. Skeptics have too often forgotten, and Sextos is no exception to the rule, that the only adequate expression of Nescience and Suspense is profound silence.

The first book of the Principles closes with these definitions and general remarks on true and fictitious Skepticism. With the second book Sextos commences the methodical discussion of his subject. Taking as his guide the Stoical division of philosophy into logical, physical, and ethical, he investigates at length these three classes of truths, the discussion occupying the whole of his two remaining books.

He first of all deals with the logical criterion of truth. This is of three kinds, or literally—

'The by whom'—the man who judges.
'The by what'—the faculties by which he judges.
'The according to what'—the standard of judgment.

All of these are, according to Sextos, insufficient criteria of truth. As to the first, man is 'not only incomprehensible, but mentally inconceivable.' To prove this, it is only necessary to remember that men of great introspective powers who are accustomed to watch vigilantly the changes and vacillations they discern within them have been inclined to doubt their humanity. Sokrates, *e.g.* was uncertain whether he were a man or some other strange animal. The same truth is shown by the diversity of definition applied to him, for Demokritos, Epikouros, Plato, and others disagree in their definition of man. Assuming hypothetically that man were comprehensible, this must be either with regard to his mind or his body; but neither of these is possible, for body cannot be comprehended, because accidents differ from the substances in which they inhere, and also because it has three dimensions (length, height, and breadth), all of which we ought to know independently and absolutely before we determine them as qualities of a given body. But if we are unable to comprehend body, we are not more able to comprehend mind. On this point, again, we have a perplexing conflict of definitions among dogmatic teachers, some going even to the length of denying its existence. Further, the criterion of man may be extended indefinitely; for assume that it is accepted, the question immediately arises, What man? or what number of men? The opinions, faculties, judgments of men, differ from each other to an infinite extent, so that Dogmatists themselves are compelled to select some as superior to others and as authorities, and among these authorities there is also a perpetual

conflict. Lastly, even were truth discoverable by men, it would only be by a minority, whose lead the majority would probably decline to follow. The highest verdict on the subject of truth would be that obtainable from the collective judgments of all men —a kind of plebiscite of humanity—but this, it is obvious, could not possibly be attained. We must then conclude that man affords no criterion of truth.

II. Coming to the second criterion, we see that it is really implied in the first; but this notwithstanding, Sextos considers it by itself. The human instruments of knowledge are the senses and the intellect. Sextos claims to demonstrate that knowledge is impossible—(1) by the senses alone; (2) by the intellect alone; (3) by the combination of senses and intellect. With regard to the senses, we are again met by the usual diversity of judgment. Some thinkers say that all sensuous phenomena are unreal, others are convinced of their reality, while others again affirm some to be real and some unreal. Even if all men were agreed on the point, and it were generally conceded that the senses have the power of perception, yet they are still unworthy of belief; for the senses are affected diversely by external objects—honey, *e.g.* tastes differently in different states of the palate. If it be objected that the senses in a natural and healthy state may be depended on, Sextos answers not so, for the eye fails to distinguish at a distance whether a tower is round or square, and a similar defective discrimination attaches to other senses, *e.g.* smell and feeling. Nor when we pass from the senses to the intellect do we find our chances of certitude improve. Independently of the fact that the senses supply the intellect with the means of judging, the exercise of its own functions is surrounded with mystery. Some have even doubted of its existence. As a matter of demonstration its existence or non-existence is incapable of proof, for it can only be decided by the intellect, which is the very matter in dispute. Besides, suppose the intellect may be comprehended, and therefore shown to exist; still it cannot judge, for if it does not know anything of its own substance, mode of generation, or the place which it occupies, how can it comprehend other and extraneous matters? We are here, too, met by the difficulty of the diversity of human intellects, and it is useless to recommend us to follow the best, for we are ignorant both where to find and how to know it.

We may pass over the combination of senses and intellect as a means of human knowledge, for the mutually conflicting character posited in the very definition of such a criterion forbids us to accept it as a judge of truth.

III. The third criterion, 'according to what,' or, as it might be called, 'the criterion of relativity,' turns upon the validity to be assigned to the phantasiæ or mental representations of the Stoics. This is a point, you will remember, that came before us in the polemic of Karneades against the Stoics, so that we need not again discuss it. Sextos's argument turns largely upon the definitions and formulæ so largely employed by the thinkers of the Porch. Thus he shows that phantasiæ cannot be understood because their definition is self-contradictory. Even if they could be understood, they would be incomprehensible for another reason. They are, according to Stoics, affections of the supreme mental principle (τὸ ἡγεμονικὸν), which itself is incomprehensible. But Sextos's main argument is the perennial difficulty of making phantasiæ demonstrated proofs of external reality. The passive affections differ from the external objects, and, this difference conceded, a given phantasia will not be of the outward object, but of something else. Nor can it be said that the mind comprehends external objects by means of sensuous affections; for how can the intellect know whether those impressions are like the objects actually perceived? A man, *e.g.* looking at the image of Sokrates cannot tell whether it is like him or not without a previous and independent knowledge of his facial characteristics. Besides, granting that phantasiæ are capable of forming a judgment, a further difficulty arises—Must we place reliance on all phantasiæ, notwithstanding their mutual differences, or only on some? If the latter, on which?

No doubt the outcome of this argument is that every criterion of truth is impossible, or, in other words, Dogmatic Negation. But Sextos denies his intention of proceeding to this length; all he aims to effect is to oppose the probabilities of Dogmatists by other probabilities equally strong, so as to induce the normal state of Skeptical suspense. But it would have been well for Sextos's Skeptical consistency if he had thought of his true standpoint somewhat oftener, for it cannot be denied that in his zeal against positive Dogmatism he frequently crosses the narrow boundary line that divides them, and rushes into the opposite extreme of positive and arrogant Negation.

Somewhat unnecessarily considering the elaborate exposition of his thesis that a criterion of truth is impossible, Sextos adds to it an argument against the existence of truth itself. But here again it is the Stoics whom he is combating. They made a distinction between truth and a true thing, and Sextos shows that, even allowing this distinction, their claims to the possession of dogmatic truth are in no way forwarded.

Pursuing his investigation of logical methods—chiefly that of the Stoics—Sextos passes in review those definitions and processes which were regarded as demonstrating truth. Thus he treats of signs, of demonstration, of syllogisms, of induction, of definition, of divisions, of magnitudes, &c.; but as his method is the same in every case, we need not follow him at length. We will merely take as typical examples of his reasoning, exemplifying its strength and its weakness, his remarks on demonstration, and on magnitudes or number. To the question 'whether demonstration be possible,' Sextos replies, 'No, not if each of its constituent parts be examined.' The existence of all composite things depends on the coexistence in nature of the separate things of which they are composed. But the parts of an argument do not so coexist, for while we enounce the first premiss, neither the second nor the conclusion is yet in existence. Similarly, the second is separable both from the first and the conclusion. The Stoics themselves admitted a classified variety of imperfect arguments, and Sextos shows that the defects of these extend also to reasonings which they deemed conclusive. He takes, *e.g.* some specimens of syllogistic reasoning regarded by the Stoics as demonstrative, and points out that they are vitiated by excess or superfluity. Besides, demonstration concludes either what is manifest (phenomenal) or what is obscure; but as to the first, phenomena require no proof, for they are self-evident. The most useful form of syllogistic process would be the second—that which by means of the apparent arrived at and unveiled the obscure, or, in other words, that which penetrated the phenomenal to find the real underlying it; but this form of demonstration cannot be found. In no case, indeed, can the conclusion transcend or go beyond the contents of the premisses, and hence demonstration is impossible. Again, all demonstration must be either general or specific; that specific demonstration is impossible has already been proved, but the general is reducible to the specific, and accordingly shares its fate. There are also controversies about demonstration, about its methods and results, and for this reason there will always be room for diversity of opinion, and difficulty in final choice. Nor even, assuming the possibility of demonstration, are we nearer the object of our search; for demonstration will necessarily contain a dogma, and all dogmas are subjects of controversy. Besides, an ascertained demonstration must needs be based on another, and that again on a third, and so *ad infinitum*. A few chapters further on we arrive at Sextos's disquisition on magnitudes and numbers—'the whole and its parts,' the impossibility of which as a logical demonstration

he thus tries to prove: 'When anyone says that a number, *e.g.* the number 10, is divisible into 1, 2, 3, and 4, it is not the number 10 that is so divisible, for directly one part, viz. the unit, is taken away, what is really left is not 10 but 9. Hence the subtraction and division are of other numbers, not of the ten, which differ according to each subtraction. Perhaps therefore the division of the whole into parts is impossible, for if the whole be divisible into parts, the parts should be comprehended in the whole before the division; but perhaps they are not so comprehended, for 10 is divisible into 9+1, but also into 8+2, 7+3, 6+4, and 5+5, and adding these together we might say that 55 is contained in 10, which is absurd.'

I have adduced these arguments, not so much for their intrinsic merit, as being examples of extreme Skeptical Eristic, and in order to show how the whole of Greek Free-thought is permeated by the same spirit. Sextos Empeirikos does no more than carry on the methods of the Eleatics, of Protagoras, and of the Sophists. He applies to all subjects alike the elenchus of Sokrates, and offers incontrovertible proofs of the truth of Plato's dictum, that unscrupulous Dialectic is invincible. Nor is this all: Sextos also resembles his predecessors in combating phenomena as such, and endeavouring by penetrating beneath them to discover their hidden causes and meanings. But it is not only with Hellenic thinkers that Sextos in his attack on logical methods can claim kindred. Many of his proofs of the intrinsic imperfections of logic have been insisted on by modern teachers of the science, especially by John Stuart Mill. Thus he points out that the syllogism in most of its approved forms is merely a *petitio principii*, that definition only expresses and formulates knowledge already attained and in no sense adds to it, that induction can only be held to possess a completely conclusive character when it is exhaustive, and this in all large generalizations it obviously cannot be.

More interesting for us are the physical and ethical portions of his work, which are comprehended in the third book. The first chapter commences with an inquiry concerning God, whom 'the majority of men regard as the most effective cause of all things.' Sextos begins the subject by warning his readers that, following the ordinary opinions of men undogmatically, he not only admits the existence of the gods, but he worships them, and believes in their providence. But this admission of acquiescence in customary belief does not make him less resolute in dealing with Dogmatists on the subject. We have already noticed the usual Skeptical ratiocination on the point, so that the briefest summary of Sextos's

arguments must here suffice us. His first objection is based on our inability to conceive, except in accordance with the evidence of our senses, or knowledge otherwise acquired. Next he appeals to the diversity of opinions among renowned thinkers. He then points out that we cannot know enough of God to attribute to him qualities, *e.g.* immortality or blessedness, which are only reflections or contrasts of human properties. Even were we able to conceive God by the intellect, yet we should be content to remain in suspense concerning him in our inevitable incertitude as to the truth of our conception. He who demonstrates God's existence must do so by what is manifest or by what is obscure, but neither of these alternatives is possible. Again, God is manifest either by himself or by something else, but here too both processes are affirmed to be inconclusive. An additional element of doubt is added when we examine the attributes commonly assigned to God, *e.g.* his providence, for the question immediately arises, If he exercises foresight, is it over some beings, or over all? If the latter, what is the meaning of the evil in the world? Another difficulty arises from his omnipotence. If God possesses that attribute and does not bestow good on all, it must be because he is jealous of some of his creatures. Such are the arguments by which Sextos opposes not so much a customary undogmatic belief in deity, as an elaborate certitude on the matter. He next treats of cause, but we need not take his reasoning on that point into consideration, as he only reproduces the argument of Ainesidemos, which we have already noticed. Other physical objects of attack are 'material principles,' the comprehensibility of bodies, their composition, &c. Against the possibility of motion he has an elaborate argument, in which, however, he avoids the negative pitfall of denying its possibility, as did the Eleatics, saying that Skeptics regarded motion 'as existent in phenomena, but as non-existent in the philosophic reason.' Similar arguments are employed to destroy the dogmas contained in 'natural change,' in 'generation and corruption,' in the persistency of material bodies. Against the last he employs the Herakleitean flux, which he elsewhere charges with being Dogmatic. He concludes the physical part of his work by an examination of space, time, and number, which, regarded as real entities and not as mere phenomena, he concludes to be indemonstrable.

Of the third or ethical portion of his thesis it will be enough to say that he disproves the existence of intrinsic universal good and evil by the same methods that he uses against other supposed truths or existences. He urges the diversity of definitions used by the

Dogmatists of the supreme good, of pleasure and pain, &c., ending with the usual conclusion, that in nature nothing is either good or evil; but he diminishes the force of his argument by proceeding, with his customary exuberant Dialectic, to show that in nature the indifferent also does not exist! His ratiocination on this subject is, however, purely speculative, and does not touch the ordinary obligations of men considered as social or patriotic duties.

At some risk of wearying you with Skeptical technicalities and puerilities, I have thought it right to place before you a fairly complete account of the greatest product of Greek Skepticism. The work is of importance, not only as a collection of Skeptical arguments, but as revealing the intellectual idiosyncrasy of its author. Sextos was clearly a Skeptical Eclectic; for, though his primary tenet was Pyrrhonic suspense, he appreciated and employed all the methods of preceding Skeptics, especially in attacking Dogmatists. Thus we find in his pages the Eristic of the Sophists, the Nescience of Sokrates, the Epoché of Pyrrhôn, the dogmatic Negation of his disciples, the Idealism of the Eleatics and of Plato, the Probabilism of Karneades, the doctrines of Ainesidemos—whatever method, in short, had ever been employed by his countrymen to encounter dogma. But though his energies are thus diffused over the whole field of Greek Free-thought, his arguments are often, perhaps unavoidably, monotonous. Bearing in mind his favourite processes, we might without much difficulty anticipate his treatment of any given subject-matter. The following seem to me his chief Skeptical weapons: 1. The disjunctive syllogism. 2. Extreme analysis, sometimes real, sometimes verbal, dividing the whole into parts, and each part into fractions, and placing these in mutual antagonism. 3. Nominalism. 4. Employing the plea *ad infinitum* in all continuous existences, *e.g.* in causation, space, time, number, God, &c. 5. Appeal to diversity of opinions, and exaggerating their discordances. Nor can it be denied that his ratiocination not unfrequently departs from the judicial equipoise that ought to mark the true Skeptic, the devotee of mental Ataraxia, and has the disagreeable characteristics of ordinary controversial pleading. Thus we find occasional self-contradictions, equivocations, evasions, and sophisms of all kinds. Nothing comes amiss as a refutation or contradiction of Dogmatism. He is clearly of opinion that, on the principle of any stick serving to beat a dog, any argument suffices to destroy a dogma. On the other hand, we must bear in mind, first, that this unscrupulous Eristic is an indissoluble part of Hellenic controversy—the Eleatics and Sokrates employ the same weapons as zealously and unscrupulously as Sextos himself;

the method approved itself to the inborn love of freedom which marked the Greek intellect, and which made them fond of intellectual gymnastics, verbal jugglery, &c. for their own sakes; and secondly, we must never lose sight of the real standpoint of Sextos and his fellow-Skeptics. The commentators on his works have liberally bespattered them with complaints of the mingled audacity and childishness of his arguments. That a man should set himself in earnest to overthrow such certitudes as time, space, number, the elementary rules of arithmetic, the axioms of Euclid, seems to them a strong argument for his defective sanity. They are eager to overthrow his reasoning, by methods like that of Diogenes, who refuted Zenon's proof of the non-existence of motion by getting up and walking. But these critics ought first of all to be certain that they thoroughly understand the position and aim of such reasoners as Sextos. It might occur to them that men like Sokrates, Pyrrhôn, and Sextos, and in our own day John Stuart Mill, who dispute conventional dogmas, are not altogether the idiots they are apt to suppose. They might at least credit such powerful thinkers with the supposition that they must have some occult method of reconciling their ratiocination with the facts of the world and the dictates of common-sense, of which they themselves are ignorant. In point of fact these Skeptics have just as little inclination to question phenomena as such, as Zenon had to doubt the walking power of Diogenes or any other man. They have not the slightest doubt as to the apparent reality of space or time. They do not dispute the fact of causation. For them the phenomenal world of their daily and hourly existence is as much an actuality, a *regula vivendi*, as it is for anyone else. But when they are told that they must perforce regard these external things and their relations as absolute truths; when they are commanded to accept the properties of numbers, or the axioms of geometry, or the customary ideas of space, time, and causation as not only true for them, but true for all reasoning beings, no matter where placed, or under what conditions their ratiocinative faculties are exercised; when they are assured that the veracity of such conventional opinions is unrelated to or dependent upon their own faculties; in other words—for this is the outcome of the argument—that their senses and experience are infallible tests of absolute truth, they instinctively demur. They are willing to consider their knowledge true *apparent* knowledge, but they feel a natural diffidence in pronouncing it infallible, or deeming it all possible or conceivable cognition. They are the less inclined to admit these high claims for the conclusions of their senses or their

reason from their own repeated experience of the fallibility of their deliverances. The sole quality that could justify pretensions to absolute knowledge would be omniscience, and that they are far from believing themselves to possess. Besides, a persistent attention to the bounds of their experience and the ordinary processes of knowledge-acquisition has taught them the limited nature of their faculties. What they see and know of external things are phenomenal—the appearances they present to them, but it is quite conceivable, nay, even probable, that those external things have relations and properties in and for themselves, and irrespectively of the way in which they are compelled to apprehend them. The sweetness of honey and the fragrance of the violet, for instance, are conditioned by our possession of the senses of taste and smell; but the thinker asks, Are they qualities inherent in their several objects as well as apparent to us? Are our senses absolute tests not only of phenomenal but of real existence? What, in other words, are 'things in themselves'? To take the case of number, which Sextos attacks vigorously in both of his works. We know the apparent properties of numbers and their combinations. But what are numbers in themselves? What are they in distant portions of the universe? What are they also to higher intelligences? We know that many of the combinations of arithmetic as well as the conclusions of geometry appear to be self-contradictory; in any case, we cannot offer a satisfactory reason-why of even the simplest of them. Accordingly thinkers like Sextos come to the conclusion that the verities of arithmetic are not necessarily absolute and unconditional. They can imagine numerical properties and combinations other than those we possess; and what they can easily imagine they must hold to be conceivable, and what is conceivable may, for aught they know, really exist. To such intellects truth is conceived as separable from their personal perceptions or experience. It has a scope infinitely greater than the range even of the whole aggregate of human knowledge. It is conceived as absolute, unconditional, unchangeable, and eternal.

Now this very conception of truth—hypothetical as it is—may easily have the effect of intensifying the transitory, vacillating, or doubtful aspects of phenomena. The more changeable things seen, the more unchangeable are things unseen. The very mutability of phenomena seems of itself an argument for the immutability of real existence; the contradictions in numbers, *e.g.* appear to imply the existence of absolute number, in which such contradictions are impossible. Our inability to define causation, or to apprehend space and time, reveals the fact that we know

nothing of those verities in themselves; and a more enlarged survey of the field of human (supposed) knowledge is found to disclose a corresponding extent of Nescience. If you succeed in catching this standpoint, you will have no difficulty in discerning the object of Sextos and similar writers when they appear to take pleasure in exaggerating the difficulties of human knowledge, and minimizing what it may be supposed to possess of validity or demonstration. Sextos, *e.g.* is perpetually guilty of pushing his position of Suspense into dogmatic Negation, and he sometimes forgets even his own admissions and denies the existence of phenomena—the main tenet of his Skeptical faith. We may compare this excessive zeal on the part of Skeptics to the efforts of the enthusiastic religionist when, in order to emphasize the reality of the unseen world, he employs all his energies to demonstrate the futility and uncertainty of all purely mundane objects. The doubt and transitoriness of the latter seem to impart a certitude to the former. Sextos might, indeed, have almost adopted as his motto the words of St. Paul, 'The things which are seen are temporal, the things which are unseen are eternal.' The chief difference between the standpoint of the Christian Apostle and Greek Skeptic referred to the final attainability of the unseen, and even this was rather latent than manifest, for Sextos dared not affirm in express terms the impossibility of attaining absolute truth, whatever might have been his opinion of the undesirablity of such a definitive 'find.'

A further reason for the unmitigated polemic of Sextos and similar thinkers against conventional conclusions is found in their insuperable dislike to the limitation of their imagination, which comes from its restriction to purely phenomenal aspects of thought and existence. A man standing on a hill and surveying a wide horizon knows full well that there are countless horizons lying beyond his own view, and that this would be true even if he could comprehend the whole surface of the globe as in a kind of Mercator's projection; he will, therefore, refuse to make a map of the universe from his own experience and limited environment. Similarly, most Skeptics have a vivid sense of the infinite, and a corresponding imaginative energy in estimating its possible contents and characteristics. Dogma presents itself to them as an offensive obtrusion of the finite. As such they first attack it with the intellect; and if it proves impervious to that, then they bring the imagination to bear, and it is difficult to pronounce on the dogma or assumed truth which imagination, when adroitly and unscrupulously used, is powerless to undermine.

Such appears to me an equitable estimate of Sextos's chief work, and the standpoint whence it should in fairness be contemplated. Both the 'Pyrrhonian Principles' and the treatise 'Against Mathematicians' reveal their author as a man of immense erudition, of comprehensive sympathies, a keen and subtle thinker, and an unsparing controversialist. His method is remarkable for its order—the divisions of his work and the sequence of his arguments follow a natural arrangement, which it would be difficult to better. His style, though not modelled on the best products of Greek prose composition, yet possesses the virtues of clearness, directness, and perspicacity, and is sometimes enlivened by touches of vivacity and humour: his chief defects, both of style and method, being incidental to his subject, and the point of view whence he regarded it. Of the immediate influence of his writings we have no knowledge. Some few disciples seem to have followed in his wake, but none which are known to fame.[1] As I have already hinted, the line of thought of which Sextos's 'Pyrrhonian Principles' is the most noteworthy outcome in later Greek thought probably contributed to the Neo-Platonism of the Alexandrian Schools; but similar speculations had long been current in all the philosophical schools of Greece and other portions of the Roman Empire. That Sextos's works probably exercised a solvent effect on an age of which disintegration was the chief characteristic it would be needless to affirm. Nor in a more dogmatic age would the subversion of ordinary principles of practice have been the inevitable result of his teachings. For if the tendency of those teachings was to undermine some speculative conceptions, it was rather by assigning them to different sanctions and objects than by absolutely annihilating them. Their main purpose, as we have seen, was to relativize the absolute, if I may coin the phrase. Thus they did not destroy religious belief as having a national or social obligation, but as claiming to be absolutely true. They did not affect moral duties except in the sense of making them dependent on human conventions. They directed men's attention from speculation to practice by demonstrating the inherent infirmity of the former. At the same time, Sextos's method quickened men's inquisitive faculties, strengthened their dialectical powers, set them upon determining the inherent validity of their convictions, brought home inquiry to them as a personal obligation, helped to diminish the influence of various superstitions by proving their irrational basis, and on the whole exercised on a corrupt age a wholesome and enlightening

[1] On the succession of the Greek Skeptics see Appendix D.

influence. We must, however, look for a more demonstrable effect of Sextos's works in the centuries succeeding the Renaissance. Just as it followed in its own place the Platonism and Peripateticism of Greek philosophy, so in due course it succeeded to the manifestation of Platonism and Aristotelianism in the mediæval church. The two former represent the main dogmatic influences, partly ecclesiastical, partly secular, of the Middle Ages, while Sextos and similar thinkers became the recognised teachers of the Renaissance. His works, therefore, had not only the retrospective object of recording and systematizing all former schemes of Greek Skepticism which he deemed them to possess, they had besides a distinctly prospective utility, which their author could not have foreseen. They helped to furnish principles and methods by means of which men succeeded in freeing themselves from the chains of an oppressive ecclesiasticism. Few are the liberating processes and ratiocinations of the Renaissance that may not be found in Sextos Empeirikos, and for which he is not, next to Cicero, directly responsible. The nominalism of Ockam, the anti-dogmatism of Petrarca, Montaigne, Henry Stephen, and other leaders of Free-thought in France and Italy, the anti-Aristotelianism of Ramus and Picus Mirandula, may in part be attributed to his influence; while from the time that his works became known in the original he became the chosen teacher of the French Skeptics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; *e.g.* of Gassendi, La-Mothe-le-Vayer, and Bishop Huet. Even the attempt to make Sextos work in the car of ecclesiasticism, which will meet us as a prominent feature of modern Skepticism, continually resulted in a defeat of its own object, and in the recognition of his essential antagonism to ecclesiastical claims and interests. The Skepticism which ecclesiastics maintained to be the first stage of dogma proved too often the final termination of all inquiry. Men accepted it as a method and incentive to doubt—the true Skeptic position—without even desiring that it should end in definitive certitude.

Closing, as we do with Sextos, our survey of Greek Free-thought, it will be well to remember its general lessons, and the legacies it has bequeathed to the after-history of intellectual liberty. The first reflection suggested by the retrospect is the continuity of free-instincts throughout the whole course of Greek speculation. Sextos Empeirikos in the third century of the Christian era is guided by the same spirit, pursues the same methods, and adopts the same arguments as Parmenides and Zenon in the fifth century before Christ. This fact is too commonly overlooked in general estimates of Greek philosophy.

Historians mostly dwell on the varieties and diversities of Hellenic speculation. They have pointed out how its ramifications include, and are exhaustive of, all human methods of inquiry, and they are doubtless perfectly justified in so doing; but a characteristic just as striking though not so directly obvious is the similarity underlying so much apparent diversity. Thus we find in all the greatest of Greek thinkers a highly developed appreciation of freedom, an inborn dislike of dogma and of its usual accompaniments, narrowness and intolerance. Considered purely as speculation, no limits were in their estimation to be placed to the ratiocination and imaginative faculties of man. How this same instinct of freedom acted in other directions than that of philosophy I need not stop to point out, but it was clearly the source of their greatest achievements in arts and literature as well as in political science and progress. Nor were the objects of investigation which Greek thinkers set before them very different from each other. What the majority of them, especially the more intellectually affluent, from Pythagoras to Plotinos, sought for was the reality underlying phenomena, truth considered apart from human faculties and limitations. Hence it is that all the greatest thinkers of Greece are Idealists, and it is on account of their Idealism that they are Skeptics. Even the Nescience of Sokrates was largely engendered by the conviction that absolute truth was indiscoverable, and that every truth short of that was speculatively worthless. Animated by the same belief in the unreal nature of phenomena were the various Skeptical standpoints of Pyrrhôn and his successors. All these thinkers were searching for the unseen and refusing to be content with the seen. They were endeavouring to find the absolutely true in science, the unconditionally right in morals, the supreme verity which could alone satisfy their passionate desires, and of which ordinary human veracities were tantalizing mockeries, mere apples of Sodom, fair to the eye but turning to ashes in the mouth. Most of these thinkers would have echoed the plaint of our great English Idealist—

> Ye powers, why did you man create
> With such *insatiable* desire?
> If you'd endow him with no more *estate*,
> You should have made him *less aspire*;
> But now our appetites you *vex* and *cheat*,
> With *reall* hunger and *phantastic* meat.

One important outcome of this Idealism and the introspection which was its natural method was the distinct assertion of the supremacy of the individual consciousness. First set forth

in the well-known maxim of Protagoras, it underlies the whole of subsequent Greek thought. Few principles of philosophy and truth-investigation have rendered more direct services to the cause of Free-thought. We shall find it in our investigations as the animating spirit and guide of every cultural revival, of every reaction against narrow and oppressive dogma. It was the principle to which Christ appealed in opposition to Jewish dogmatism. It represents the spirit of Protestantism as against Romanism, of Cartesianism against the Scholastic philosophy. It has been the plea of numberless Free-thinkers, the single tenet of Skeptics who have disclaimed all other convictions; and though occasionally pushed, like other useful principles, to an excess refuting its own extravagance, its general action on human history and the progress of human liberty has been salutary. Especially has it contributed at sundry times and in divers manners to inculcate truth-investigation as a sacred personal duty, not to be delegated to institutions however ancient, nor to be inhibited by authorities however venerable. Greece is thus the mother-country of the most prolific of all principles of Free-thought, one which has not only been influential in the past, but which is calculated to make dogma-tyranny on a large scale and in an extreme form an impossibility for all future time. But with all these incentives and guides to Free-thought supplied by Hellenic speculation, it would be utterly wrong to suppose that morality was injuriously affected by its freedom. The general character of Greek Skeptics from Sokrates to Sextos is quite unexceptionable. Even obscurantists like Anytos and Meletos, who arraigned Sokrates for Free-teaching, dared not throw a doubt on his own rectitude and moral purity, and his successors as a class were equally free from reproach. These Free-thinkers were indeed men of too profound and penetrating intellect to make their speculation, with its confessed limitations and fallibility, the measure of their ordinary practice. Besides which their patriotism, their active social sympathies, made than keenly alive to the importance of those links which unite the different members of the community. Perhaps European speculation has still to learn from Greek philosophy that free speculation has no necessary or indissoluble connection with libertinism in morals. An impartial survey of history reveals the fact that the latter is just as often associated with extravagant and tyrannical dogma as with an extreme freedom of speculation. There was much more licence among the Romanist clergy in the Middle Ages than among the thinkers of ancient Greece at the period of its greatest social degradation.

Thus, confining ourselves to our subject, we have bequeathed by Hellenic philosophy to the after-history of human progress and enlightenment some of the noblest legacies that we could conceive or desire. Thence we derive the sanctity of human freedom, the justifiability of idealism, the responsibility in truth-search of the individual reason and consciousness; the sacredness of human laws, usages, and conventions; the importance of practice as compared with theory. Especially for us Greek philosophy is the ultimate source of all Skeptical speculation. Few are those of the many Skeptics mentioned in history who owe nothing to the elenchus of Sokrates, to the idealism of the Eleatics and Plato, to the subtle investigations of Pyrrhôn, Karneades, and Sextos. Thus our survey of Greek Free-thought, in addition to its own inherent interest and its undeniable claim for consideration on every thinking man, possesses for us the additional importance that it is an indispensable introduction to the study of all other systems and methods of Free-thought.

ARUNDEL. In fairness, Doctor, we must compliment you on your excessive ingenuity. In your definition of it as a repression of self-assertion and a virtue related to self-denial, you have discovered a *rôle* for Skepticism which renders it not only unjust but impious to question its right to human recognition. I, however, own to some difficulty in detecting more than a superficial resemblance between the denial of an obvious truth and the repression of an evil besetting passion. The act of a man who should refuse to assert for supposed purposes of self-discipline his perception of some undoubted truth, I should consider not so much morally meritorious as qualifying him for an asylum.

TREVOR. I did not put forth that aspect of Skepticism as my own conception of it, but as a view that commended itself to many Greek thinkers. They undoubtedly regarded the repression of undue assertion as an act of self-mortification, and possessing an ethico-religious significance. Further reflection will also, I think, convince you that there is little difference at bottom between intellectual and moral self-denial. The latter implies the suppression of a desire for what I, *e.g.* hold to be good, or at least agreeable; the former signifies the suppression of a wish to affirm what I believe

to be true. That both one and the other may have a disciplinary value is, I think, indisputable, but the intellectual self-repression is not supposed to be pushed to the extent of repressing obvious and unmistakable convictions, though in effect it often is, especially by ecclesiastics.

ARUNDEL. But what conceivable benefit do I derive from suppressing some unmistakable truth? I possess, let us say, the fullest conviction that two straight lines cannot inclose a space. No amount of mental pressure exercised by myself or by others would serve to lessen or disturb the conviction. I want to know what spiritual benefit I should be likely to attain by avouching my belief in the contrary assumption.

TREVOR. Well, suppose that the proposition, 'Two straight lines cannot inclose a space,' is closely related to other propositions of which you do not feel so fully persuaded, but which you have some extrinsic reasons for believing to be true; or suppose some religion or institution to which, on independent grounds, you owe allegiance, and which claims to be supernaturally guided in its determinations, chooses to say to you, 'Whatever you may think on the subject, I bid you believe on my authority that two straight lines may inclose a space;' or, suppose that the self-assertory temper that prompted you to asseverate such a proposition and to admit no denial or modification of it, could be shown to you as likely to induce a dogmatic temper with regard to other matters, of which you could not possibly have the same assurance. In either of these cases the repression of an obvious fact might be assumed to be attended with salutary results. Hence it would be open to any ethical teacher or religious creed to say to you, 'It will be better for your general disposition, and for reasons connected with your spiritual welfare, that you should repress all inclination to self-assertion, should give up all dogma-making and affirmation into my hands, that you should sacrifice your reason to duty or religion—in a word, that you should decline to affirm except what I bid you affirm.' Now the last supposition is just the ground on which not only the Greeks but Hindus and Christians are agreed, as I have said, sub-

stantially as to the ethical or religious merit of intellectual self-renunciation. They all concur in the advice, 'Repress persistently all self-assertion and individual conviction, and you will then have no difficulty in accepting the dogmas we propound.' . . . To tell you the truth, Arundel, I am rather surprised that you should not have instinctively recognised a principle so entirely ecclesiastical.

MISS LEYCESTER. Instead of two straight lines inclosing a space, Mr. Arundel might have taken the theory of transubstantiation—the essence of the elements being changed while their qualities remain. Here, I take it, there is a distinct self-repression of conviction in its most difficult sphere—that of our sensations. One can easily understand that a man who had coerced himself into accepting such a theory would afterwards find no difficulty in admitting other beliefs based on the same authority. Indeed, theologians seem fully alive to the importance of putting their more startling tenets in the foreground. What are termed the *distinctive beliefs* of most churches comprise not their easiest but most difficult *credenda*.

MRS. HARRINGTON. I confess to sharing Mr. Arundel's reluctance to accept intellectual self-denial in the light of a religious duty, possibly for a similar reason—a defective appreciation of ecclesiasticism. One can understand how the principle of faith comes in to supplement imperfect knowledge, but one is staggered when told that it must also supersede assured knowledge. . . . Indeed, I should be glad of some authority for the open admission of a principle so capable of mischief, even by Romanists themselves.

TREVOR (reaching down from his bookshelves a commonplace book and opening it). I can readily undertake to satisfy you on that score. Indeed, the difficulty would be in selection. All the manuals of asceticism in use in the Romish church recommend Skepticism in some form or other. Here, *e.g.* are a few sentences from the *De Contemptu Mundi*,[1] a manual of great repute in the Middle Ages, and ascribed to Innocent III. 'The more labour a man expends in search, the less will he find . . . for he

[1] Cap. xi. *De Studio Sapientum.*

who understands most doubts most, and he seems to himself most wise who is most foolish. Hence the highest part of knowledge is to know that one is ignorant, for God made man upright, but he has entangled himself in infinite questions.' Here, again, are a few sentences from De Balzac's *Socrate Chrétien*: 'But, I pray you, what can be a nobler sacrifice than a mind conquered and subdued? What more acceptable offering to God than a man's own reason, that haughty and presumptuous faculty, that fierce and proud being, born for command and superiority, which will always mount upward and never descend; which, far from submitting to the yoke, to captivity, to death, never dreams but of victory, of triumph, and the conqueror's crown? . . .'[1] I might read to you many such excerpts from Augustine, from Pascal, from Bossuet, from Calvin and other Protestant reformers, but I will spare you on a subject which we shall again have to touch upon, and on which dogmatic religionists of all types are agreed.

ARUNDEL. Even granting your standpoint to be partially true, there is still an enormous difference between the religionist and the Skeptic. The injunction of the former is, 'Put off your prepossessions and convictions, that you may be ready to embrace the truth I submit to you;' the advice of the latter is, 'Get rid of your knowledge altogether, for the process is wholesome, and the condition of professed ignorance is the highest achievement of human wisdom.' Or put it thus—the first says: 'Put off your clothes and I will give you a better suit;' the latter: 'Do away with your clothing and go naked, for nakedness is healthful.'

TREVOR. In reality, you have conceded all that I cared to maintain. In both cases we have a Skeptical divesting of supposed knowledge and knowledge-faculties. I readily grant the dissimilarity of object, as well as the extent to which the process is carried. Happily Skepticism contains in itself a principle of freedom which is not likely to allow the place vacated by an uncertain belief to be occupied by another perhaps still more uncertain, while the religionist who has abrogated his reason is utterly at the mercy of the creed

[1] *Œuvres Comp.* vol. ii. pp. 49, 50.

which has exacted the sacrifice. As to your simile, you must agree that in some climates nakedness, or the nearest decent approach to it, is decidedly healthful.

HARRINGTON. By a curious coincidence of physical and mental affinity, you have intellectual nudity attaining its extreme point in those countries where physical nakedness is most justifiable—I mean in India. There you have intellectual self-suppression reaching its ultimate stage of self-extinction. Indeed, our present consideration of the later stages of Greek Skepticism seems a useful introduction to our survey of Hindu Mysticism and Nihilism. . . . As regards the point you have just been discussing, I agree with Trevor. Dogmatists of all creeds are careful to induce a state of Nescience, as the primary condition of receiving their science, and from their point of view justifiably. Newman's 'Grammar of Assent' and Mansel's 'Bampton Lectures' stand in this respect on just the same level with the 'Pyrrhonian Principles' of Sextos Empeirikos. From very different standpoints, and with very diverse aims, all these alike try to destroy, or at any rate weaken, customary criteria of truth. . . . But as I have now 'the lead' in our intellectual game of 'whist' (for is not Skepticism a forcible *hushing* of intellectual pronouncements?), I will take occasion to remark that in the Probabilism of the Academics we have, in my judgment, the most valuable product of Greek Skepticism. I confess I have not a high opinion of 'suspense' as a final product of thought, though there are many occasions where it is evidently required. As a rule, it postulates an exact equilibration of antagonistic truths, which in speculative and moral subjects is very rare. Indeed, I should doubt its possibility in a single instance in which all the grounds of assent and dissent were completely exhausted. Now, Probabilism meets all the real necessities of the case. It implies the existence of the proximate truth, which perhaps is all that our faculties are capable of apprehending or our environment capable of furnishing, and in its admission of varying degrees or stages of truth it acts as a direct incentive to search.

ARUNDEL. I cannot share your admiration for Proba-

bilism, nor do I think there is really the difference you allege between it and Suspense. Both are conditions of imperfect certitude, and one might always be stated in terms of the other, especially if, as you say, the balance of antitheticals in Epoché is always uneven. Now, I distinctly decline partial when I am in search of perfect truth; indeed, when the former puts itself forward as the only truth possible, it seems the counterfeit presentment of a reality. As Trevor said in his paper, it is a red herring drawn across the trail. Besides, I regard probability and certainty as differing, not only in degree, but in kind The certainty, *e.g.* I feel of my own existence is a truth different altogether from that which I might have of the existence of a distant friend, or of any other matter not actually present to my consciousness. I am well aware that Probability must enter into the region of religious beliefs, and that it is all that can be urged for some of the more important tenets of Christianity, but I think its sphere, when it cannot be vivified and converted into certainty, should be limited. To take an example, I could not permit the existence of God to be based on mere likelihood. I could not worship a Probability. I could not feel reverence and affection for a being whose existence was the outcome of, say, twenty-one reasons for opposed to eighteen reasons against, and who might thus be said to be engendered by argumentative odds. I therefore share Augustine's repugnance to Probability as the sole goal of human truth-search, and believe with him that the human reason is destined to attain positive indubitable certainty.

TREVOR. For another reason, I also object to receiving Probability in lieu of truth. I do not agree with Arundel that it is quite tantamount to suspense. On the contrary, it is or may easily become dogmatic. It is the assertion, if not of an absolutely definitive truth, yet of one that claims all definitiveness possible. As such, it possesses the property and the vice of finality. It places an unwarrantable limit to possibility, and closes the door on speculation. Instead of always inciting to search, as Harrington hinted, it may take away all motive for search, for the same reason that Dogma does; because if probability in any given matter is all that humanity can attain,

why waste more time in laborious investigation? The end is already reached, and it is one which by its own confession is imperfect and uncertain. A still greater grievance, from the Skeptic's standpoint, is the arbitrary limitation of his imagination. Instead of luxuriating in a boundless expanse of indefiniteness and incertitude, which is his sole compensation for the absence of demonstrative truth, he must needs submit to a narrow and unworthy circumscription. But I have already urged this final plea of Skepticism more than once, so I will say no more on the subject.

MRS. HARRINGTON. My objection to Probability is of a more humble kind. I would urge its insufficiency as a standard of practical conduct and resolute human action.

HARRINGTON. I fear Probabilism is not likely to get a majority of votes in our philosophical parliament. That Trevor, from his extreme Skeptical standpoint of 'all truth or nothing,' should oppose it, I don't wonder at, but I should have expected more consideration from Arundel, who in this point also seems open to Trevor's charge of being imperfectly ecclesiastical. You have not only forgotten your Butler, Arundel, but you have been singularly unmindful of the basis of all theology, viz. faith or belief as the outcome of Probability, not certitude or knowledge, which are the fruits of science. On this point I could produce against you a host of ecclesiastical opponents, consisting of apostles, popes, bishops, and inferior clerics of all grades. Passing over the well-known utterances of the Bible on the point, I will only refer you to the *dictum* of Gregory the Great, viz. that the merit of religious faith would be vitiated by certainty. Nor do I think that your plea of the difference in kind between probability and certainty can be sustained. On the other hand, it is easy to conceive a convergence of probabilities that would amount to, and be undistinguishable from, the most absolute certitude. Indeed, the disposition you have casually manifested of asserting theological verities as demonstrable certainties seems to me the peculiar weakness of your profession. Your conclusions always cover more ground than your premisses. For my part I instinctively distrust the infallible tone of divines, even when they enunciate

truths in which I fully believe. There is a superfluous veracity about them which seems out of harmony both with the scope and nature of our faculties and the conditions of our environment. Hence, for my own part, I should rather have even the existence of God put forward as an overwhelming probability than asserted as an absolute certainty, and I am apt to think that more mischief arises on these important subjects from excessive than from defective proof. I may add that your position is precisely similar to Trevor's. You both agree in claiming an amount of certitude, which, for my part, I believe to be unattainable, and you both reject those inferior grounds of belief which alone are in our power. Not that theologians and extreme Skeptics only are guilty on this point. Men of science, whose methods, if they taught them nothing else, ought to teach them caution and modesty, are continually transgressing the limits of legitimate reasoning. From partial inductions and imperfectly verified experiments they are perpetually inferring the most universal and absolute conclusions. Now in my opinion all the generalizations of science are reducible to varying degrees of probability, and there is not a single law or general process transcending the limits of our own experience and our position in time and space of which it can be affirmed that it is absolutely true. Taking as a crucial instance the Copernican and Newtonian Astronomy, I agree with a recent German writer[1] that all those theories can claim is probability, and that we can in no case admit them to be absolute truths. The same remark applies with overwhelming force to such theories as 'evolution,' 'variation by selection,' and whatever other law or process is assumed to have been in existence centuries before the earth was inhabited by man. No doubt the usual plea of the necessity of hypothesis and imagination in science must be conceded, but we must nevertheless remember that men of science have a faculty of restricting their hypotheses to the precise conditions of things of which they desire to establish a basis, and of limiting their imagination to conceiving causes exclusively suitable to what they have already predetermined to be the actual order of events.

[1] Prof. Foerster, *Wahrheit und Wahrscheinlichkeit*, p. 22.

To Trevor's objection to Probability no reply is possible. If, as he has repeatedly admitted, he is indifferent to arguments based on the actual constitution of the world and of our faculties in relation to it, there is nothing further to be said. The efforts of himself and of similarly extreme Skeptics and Idealists are directed to prove that Kant was mistaken when he thought the dove could not transcend the atmosphere in which it soared. Whatever their own opinion may be as to the result of their efforts, they will always have a difficulty in persuading the cold and critical observer that they have been attended with success. As to their dream of escaping from the conditions of human existence and finding 'things in themselves,' I share the opinion of a humorous friend who observes that he will never believe in a 'Ding an sich' until he has an actual living specimen caught, and confined in a cage and amenable to sight, touch, and every other sense that can be brought to bear on an ordinary wild animal.

Your objection, Maria, that Probability is not a good rule of conduct is, I am bound to confess—at some sacrifice to my marital feelings—the weakest of all. In the Second Academy, as Trevor told us, Probability was first accepted as especially a rule of conduct where speculative certainty was not attainable, and all the great Doctors of Probabilism—Bishop Butler especially—have agreed that this is its chiefest and most valuable function. Like all decisive people—whose ratiocinations are so rapid that their conclusions seem instinctive—you forget that most of the actions of life, so far as they are not automatic, depend upon calculations of some kind or other, upon a comparison of risks and advantages, upon a balancing of continually shifting and varying odds, and so far upon Probability. The man of business, *e.g.* has no other guide in his monetary and other transactions than a likelihood of the course he chooses to adopt turning out preferable to the alternative courses he sees fit to reject; and the same procedures, though often latent and unconscious, are employed in all other departments of human activity. In short, Probability seems to me the best of all rules, whether for human speculation or human action.

MISS LEYCESTER. Notwithstanding your encomium on Probability, you stand in a minority of one in making it a substitute for Truth, for I am sure Miss Trevor and Mrs. Arundel will side with us in refusing partial Truth as the only goal of human effort. According to your theory, the universe is constructed with the intention of thwarting all our hopes and disappointing all our aspirations. The human intellect asks for bread and is offered a stone; it demands a fish and is awarded a serpent. It does not need much audacity or mental independence to demur to such a conclusion. Though not myself a Skeptic, I would share Dr. Trevor's alternative, and prefer to go consciously truthless, than try to satisfy the *sacra fames* for truth on such questionable and unsatisfying food. For my part I am inclined to think that the old argument of a felt want implying the possibility of its satisfaction has more to say for it than people generally allow; and I do not feel in me any intense passion for probability, while I do think I have an earnest yearning after truth. As to your joke about catching and caging an actual 'Ding an sich,' there is, as appears to me, something very pathetic in the fact that the highest intellects in all ages and countries have bent their energies to find an eternal immovable reality beneath the changeable phenomena of our terrestrial existence.

ARUNDEL. Very true, Miss Leycester, and that reminds me to take exception against Trevor's parallel between the efforts of the Skeptic to attain transcendental realities, or things in themselves, and the endeavours of Christians to attain immortality. The Skeptic, according to his own confession, has no desire to obtain the object of his quest, and is not even sure of its existence, while the Christian is both certain of what he strives for and believes that he may attain it.

TREVOR. I recognise the difference you speak of, but the parallel is complete for the main purpose for which I advanced it. I merely wished to show how in the two instances of Skeptic and Religionist the certitude of the unseen was assumed to derive confirmation from the fluctuations and uncertainties of the seen.

MISS LEYCESTER. Our *séance* has extended to an unconscionable time. We next discuss, it seems, Hebrew and Hindu Skepticism. Charles remarked just now that our present subject was a suitable introduction to Indian Skepticism. The Indian intellect, I suppose, carried the nonentity of knowledge a stage further than did the later Greek Skeptics, though I cannot readily conceive a denial of knowledge more complete than that put forth by some of the latter.

TREVOR. But the starting-point was different, and so also was the termination. Let me summarize them thus. Both Greek Skeptic and Hindu Mystic were occupied in the same search, both tried to find the eternal and invisible reality underlying our mundane existence. The suspense of the Greek was in part the expression of unavoidable disappointment that attended the attempt; in part it postulated its continuance. Hindu negation conceded the impossibility of the effort, but instead of wishing to prosecute it like the bolder and more energetic Greek, it endeavoured to get rid of the impulse by destroying consciousness. We may compare them to two men puzzling themselves with the reflections in a mirror. The first, affirming that those images must have a cause, proceeds to search for it; he accordingly turns the mirror in various directions, takes out the back, &c., confesses himself unable to solve the mystery, but still takes pleasure in its investigation. The second, after anxiously trying to explore the mystery, and similarly failing, simply destroys the mirror, and the puzzling images are thus annihilated. Thus Hindu Skepticism greatly transcends Greek. The latter destroys the thought, but the former annihilates the thinker. For the mysteries of human consciousness no solution could well be more thorough than its destruction.

HARRINGTON. 'Thorough,' no doubt, but scarcely satisfactory. It is like setting fire to a haunted house to clear it of ghosts. The extinction, moreover, is fictitious. Consciousness must still remain, if only to pronounce on its own annihilation—in which *post-mortem* function it acts the part of those who have perpetrated the grim joke of announcing to their friends by letter their own decease.

MISS LEYCESTER. That is not all. Thought and Thinker being really one, the annihilation of either involves that of the other. Hence I cannot see much difference between Hellenic and Hindu Skepticism. Indeed, the only legitimate outcome of the ten 'Tropoi' would be a condition of Nescience bordering on, if not entailing, self-extinction.

ARUNDEL. For my part, I am always glad to find the suicidal propensities of extreme Skepticism so distinctly admitted. When Skepticism is seen to involve such transparent absurdities there is a chance of recognition for poor dogmatists, who cannot, however much they try, divest themselves of consciousness, nor of cognition, nor of an external world.

TREVOR. We must, at any rate, credit Skeptics with candour. They have always been fully alive to the suicidal effect of their principles. The ten 'Tropoi,' *e.g.* were compared by Bishop Huet to Samson, who by the overthrow of the Philistines slew himself.

HARRINGTON. Those same 'Tropoi' seem to have considerably exercised the ingenuity of succeeding Skeptics in finding analogies adequate to their excellences.

TREVOR. True; besides the simile just mentioned they have been compared by Bartholmess to the Decalogue in the Jewish law, by Le-Vayer to Samson's foxes which carried fire and destruction into the standing corn of the Philistines, and by others to the ass's jaw-bone by which the same hero is said to have wrought havoc among his enemies. But I may remind you that the similes of the Greek Skeptics themselves were just as expressive in defining the suicidal tendency of extreme Skepticism. As I said in my paper, they compared it to a drastic medicine, and to fire which, consuming other things, burnt itself out.

MISS TREVOR. Curiously, Shakespeare has that very thought. Speaking in 'Love's Labour Lost' of study or truth-search, he says—

> And when it hath the thing it hunteth most,
> 'Tis won, as towns with fire, so won, so lost.

. . . but if you will excuse me, it is getting late, and quite time that we broke up.

EVENING V.

HEBREW AND HINDU SKEPTICISM.

גַּם אֶת־הָעֹלָם נָתַן בְּלִבָּם מִבְּלִי אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יִמְצָא הָאָדָם
אֶת־הַמַּעֲשֶׂה אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה הָאֱלֹהִים מֵרֹאשׁ וְעַד־סוֹף׃

Ecclesiastes iii. 11.

'Ich bin der Geist, der stets verneint!
Und das mit Recht; denn Alles, was entsteht
Ist werth, dass es zu Grunde geht.'

GOETHE, *Faust.*

'There is a certain grave acquiescence in Ignorance, a recognition of our impotence to solve momentous and urgent questions, which has a satisfaction of its own. After high aspirations, after renewed endeavours, after bootless toil, after long wanderings, after hope, effort, weariness, failure, painfully alternating and recurring, it is an immense relief to the exhausted mind to be able to say, "At length I know that I can know nothing about anything."'

J. H. NEWMAN, *Grammar of Assent*, p. 201.

βλέπομεν γὰρ ἄρτι δι' ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι, τότε δὲ πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον.

ST. PAUL.

'Saltem scis te dubitare an sit aliquid veri, et hoc ipsum est veritas.'

AUGUSTINE, *lib. de Religione.*

EVENING V.

HEBREW AND HINDU SKEPTICISM.

THE fifth sitting of our Skeptical conclave fell due on the last week in September, and, like the four preceding ones, was appointed to be held at Hilderton Hall. Mr. Harrington and Miss Leycester had arranged, if the day was fine, to walk to Hilderton across the downs, and the Arundels were to meet them at some point of their route. There was a short cut over the down between Mr. Harrington's house and Hilderton village which reduced the five miles of road to the moderate compass of three and a half. On a fine autumnal day, when the sun's rays had lost somewhat of their summer fervency, and a wholesome crispness prescient of winter might be detected in the atmosphere, this was a very lovely walk. Passing from the smooth turf of the downs behind Mr. Harrington's house, it traversed the outskirts of a picturesque wood, the shady glades of which were now clothed in autumnal russet, while its straggling grassy paths bordered with bracken had also put off their summer vesture of primroses, and were beginning to don their winter coat of many colours—the bright gold, orange, and dark-brown leaves with which the overhanging hazels plentifully bestrewed them. Further on the path skirted here and there plantations of spruce and Scotch fir, whose dark-green tints lent colour to a landscape the variety of which consisted rather in diversity of form and contour than in a many-hued brilliancy of colouring. Mr. Harrington and his sister-in-law greatly enjoyed their walk, and wished that Mrs. Harrington, who was going in the carriage later on in the evening, had been with them. The afternoon was very pleasant on the downs. The sun shone out of a cloudless sky,

but its rays were tempered by a north-west breeze which at times swelled almost to a gale. On their arrival at that part of the grassy track that branched off to Hilderton, they encountered not only the Arundels, whom they partly expected, but also Dr. and Miss Trevor, who had been tempted by the fineness of the day to accompany them. The whole party resolved to extend their walk a little further before turning homewards, and the peculiar transparency of the atmosphere suggested the attempt of seeing the Isle of Wight and Southampton Water, which the shepherds on the downs and the long-sighted folk of the neighbourhood claimed often to have seen from spots adjacent. Our party were, however, unsuccessful with the naked eye, but with the aid of Mr. Arundel's field-glass they could discern different points of the south coast pretty clearly. Having exhausted the scenery, they turned their steps homewards, and proceeded by grassy tracks and chalky lanes to Hilderton. On their way through the village they stopped at the church to inspect some improvements which Mr. Arundel had recently done to his chancel, and availed themselves of the opportunity of resting after their walk.

When they met in Dr. Trevor's library after dinner, the host commenced the discussion:—

TREVOR. By a happy coincidence we have all, with the exception of Mrs. Harrington, enjoyed to-day the opportunity of realizing as a physical sensation the kind of feeling which our theme of to-night is calculated to impart.

MRS. HARRINGTON. What do you mean, Dr. Trevor?

TREVOR. I mean that we have within the last few hours experienced a sensation akin to the particular frame of mind with which we might be supposed to pass from our recent discussions to our subject of to-night.

MRS. ARUNDEL. Our subject is Hebrew and Hindu Skepticism, but I cannot conceive what this has to do with our afternoon walk. Certainly, I saw nothing on the downs which reminded me either of Hebrew or Hindu thought.

ARUNDEL. I am afraid we are not good hands at solving riddles; for my part, I give it up.

HARRINGTON. We have not sufficient data, I think, on which to found a decision. The point of your analogy, you say, is the transition from Greek to Hebrew Skepticism. (After a pause.) Do you mean that Greek thought is like the top of a Wiltshire down, and Oriental speculation like the more sheltered, hill-surrounded Wiltshire valleys?

MISS LEYCESTER. Please stop a moment. I think I know now what Dr. Trevor means. . . . The change from the sunny and shadeless down to the dim religious light of the church, which we appreciated so much this afternoon, is like the passing from Greek Skepticism to Oriental.

TREVOR. You have nearly hit it, Miss Leycester. I did not, however, mean to contrast them as degrees of lesser or more light, but as distinct atmospheres, so to speak, with different surroundings and suggestive of quite opposite ideas. The chief characteristics of Greek thought we have seen to be its passionate love for and enjoyment of freedom, its comprehensive outlook, the buoyancy, ease, and grace of its motion. . . . To breathe it has the same stirring, invigorating effect on one's mental faculties as our walk on the down this afternoon may be said to have had on our physical powers. We were all ready to admit how exhilarating we found the 'down' air, how much we enjoyed the distant and diversified scenery continually opening up before us, how delightfully the sunshine warmed the breeze, while the breeze in turn tempered the sun's heat, how thoroughly our whole environment was permeated by fresh, free, and healthful influences. . . . And yet when we descended the down and came by the sheltered lane into the village and to Arundel's church, we all agreed that the contrast was most pleasant. The dim religious light was a refreshing change after the shadeless down. The stillness of the church was equally grateful after the restless and occasionally boisterous gusts of the breeze, even the confinement of our prospect by four narrow walls imparted a feeling of relief to our eyesight wearied with long distances and dimly discerned objects. Precisely the same feeling—the remark has been made more than once—comes over the thinker when he leaves Indo-Germanic speculation and pays a visit to Semitic thought.

He will miss the breadth of speculation, the uncontrolled freedom, the healthy play of his faculties, the careless abandon, or else the sublime confidence which projects itself into the Infinite, reckless of received convictions and of possible results . . . but on the other hand he will gain a sense of self-absorption, a feeling of stillness and repose, a sensation of boundedness and limitation, which occasionally and to most persons are eminently grateful. Speaking professionally, I should deem such a change as healthful to the mind as a night's rest after a long day's exertion is to the body. A friend of mine, whose whole life is immersed in original research, once told me that before he goes to sleep every night he soothes his excited nerves by reading some portion of his Hebrew Psalter or his Greek Testament, and he finds this composing draught of Semiticism act like an opiate on his overwrought brain. The same thing is told also of Sir Robert Peel—after an exciting debate in the House of Commons he read some serious work before he retired as a mental sedative.

ARUNDEL. Thanks, Doctor, for your encomium of Dogma, and your admission of the advantage of distinct boundaries as against distant and hazy horizons. I was aware that with a happy inconsistency you occasionally evinced an appreciation of dogmatic standpoints, but I did not expect such a naïve admission of the fact.

HARRINGTON. It does not appear to me that the Doctor's admission goes far in the direction you suppose. At most, his appreciation of Dogma is only as a temporary resting-place or as a nap after exertion, useful to qualify him for further Skeptical activity.

TREVOR. Quite right, Harrington! You have correctly diagnosed my occasional Dogma-fits, to which I have no hesitation in pleading guilty. They are really no more than transient relaxations of a mental energy whose main activities and instincts are Skeptical. I am bound to admit that the occasional conception of fixities and boundaries, even though their existence be more or less assumed, or else are to be regarded as emotional rather than intellectual, is as grateful, I might say as imperious, as our unquestionable con-

viction of objects within our ken. I much doubt whether there ever was a Skeptic who did not sometimes relieve the tension of his intellect by the supposition of a state of things different from that disclosed by his Skepticism. . . . But the comparison of states of Dogma to periods of repose is surely a questionable compliment; and you could hardly class among Dogmatists the man whose faculties, so long as he was able to use them, were Skeptical, and who only acquiesced in fixed truths when from temporary exhaustion, perhaps, he could use them no longer.

ARUNDEL. But surely the end of labour, at least for most people, is rest, and the ultimate repose ought in fairness to determine the nature of the pure activity. According to your admission, there must be in such cases as yours a perpetual conflict between active and passive states. Skepticism cannot be very profound if it is liable at any moment to pass into a Dogma-fit, and on the other hand the Dogma-fit cannot be very severe if when it ceases there is an immediate relapse into Skepticism.

TREVOR. Excuse me, my dear Rector. Your reasoning is somewhat lax. You might as well say that there is an antagonism between night and day, whereas both are really parts of the same cycle; or that a particular psychological state cannot be succeeded in the same individual by another altogether different. So far from thinking my power of temporarily contemplating things from a Dogmatic standpoint inconsistent in a Skeptic, I am conscious of no intellectual incongruity of any kind. Indeed, I should be sorry to lack the mental versatility which enables me sometimes to see objects in a different aspect from that which is habitual to me. My occasional imaginative or emotional Dogma-states no more affect the normal Skepticism of my mind than your own chance uncertainties really detract from the fact that the bent of your intellect is dogmatic.

MISS LEYCESTER. I suspect we shall make the acquaintance of not a few Skeptics in whose intellectual formation a vein of Dogmatism is clearly discernible.

ARUNDEL. . . . like a rich lode of precious metal in a comparatively worthless stratum. But assuming that Semi-

ticism discharges in our restless Aryan Intellectualism the function of an anæsthetic or sedative, the present needs of Christendom are precisely the reverse of those stated by Bunsen. We want now to 'Semiticize the Japhetic,' to introduce more of religious composure, of devout trust, hope, and confidence, into the unquiet brain-fever of our time.

HARRINGTON. I do not agree with you. The tendencies of Indo-Germanic races are so thoroughly active, and the influence of religious anæsthetics are so baneful to the cause of human progress, that one would not wish to the latter more scope than merely to correct the excesses of the former, an office which, in my opinion, they discharge sufficiently. . . . Besides, to the Indo-Germanic intellect at its best, activity is itself repose, as our researches into Greek thought have fully demonstrated.

MRS. HARRINGTON. The transition from Greek to Hebrew, *i.e.* Bible, Skepticism has another more special import than any we have touched upon. We are now approaching those points in our survey where we might, if our discussions were public, expect to encounter 'odium theologicum.' Skepticism seems natural to heathen philosophers, but not to religious and Semitic thinkers. Accepting the ordinary theory of the purpose of the Bible, Doubt is as much out of place in its pages as some heathen idol would be in a Christian temple. I wonder, therefore, what the 'unco guid' readers of what is ironically called our 'religious press' would say to our assertion that Job and Ecclesiastes were really Skeptical books?

TREVOR. Say? They would say, doubtless, what all infallible oracles say when the least article of their creed is impugned. We should be branded with impiety, blasphemy, and a few more of those choice specimens of verbal coinage which the mint of Dogma has produced in such abundance for centuries past, but which in the present day are happily beginning to lose somewhat of their old value in human currency.

HARRINGTON. To my mind, the very fact that such doubts and speculations are mooted in the Bible gives it an additional interest, and a further claim on our consideration.

It seems to me that the Bible as a record of *human* thought would be incomplete without such traces of Skepticism. Theologians perpetually insist on the argument that the errors and shortcomings of the most eminent biblical characters, mentioned as they are without reserve, are incidental proofs of the truth of the book and its fitness for erring humanity. Similarly, I say that the doubts of Job or the Preacher, not to mention other writings of dubious belief, give the volume a direct human interest in my eyes, and prove its suitability for speculating humanity. Had the book contained no record of mental disquiet, no expression of partial unbelief, no craving after certainty, whatever its other excellences might be, I, knowing human nature as I do, could not but pronounce it in my judgment unreal. . . . Among the proofs of the superiority of the Bible to all other religious books, evidence-writers have generally overlooked the chiefest, *i.e.* the variety of its contents as resulting from the divergent standpoints and opinions of its authors.

MISS LEYCESTER. I quite agree with you, Charles. Skepticism, if it needed any other consecration than that furnished by the irrepressible instincts of humanity, might find it in the Bible. Nor is the doubt of the old Hebrew writings devoid of practical utility. In one case I happen to know of (doubtless there have been many), the expression of wavering faith in the ordinary conceptions of Providence which we find, *e.g.* in some of the Psalms was a considerable source of comfort to a benighted inquirer. He felt that he was treading in the footsteps of men who, with all their Semitic proclivities, sometimes doubted, but who nevertheless are the great models of trust and confidence for all succeeding time. The sensation was like finding well-marked human tracks in a strange country commonly reported to be untrodden by the foot of man.

TREVOR. The peculiar difficulty of what Coleridge called Bibliolatry is that it first lays down trenchantly and defiantly a theory, and then attempts to make all the facts of the case correspond with it. A theory of biblical inspiration which does not include and account for *all* the phenomena of the Bible is certainly imperfect and may become suicidal.

ARUNDEL. We must, however, remember that biblical Skepticism goes only a little way. It does not reach anything like the Pyrrhonism of the Greek or the mystic Negation of the Hindu.

TREVOR. No! For Hebrew speculation was far from possessing the daring and independence either of the Greek or the Hindu, and Skepticism is always in direct proportion to the general scope of inquiry, and the intellectual power of inquirers. But Hebrew doubters went as far as we could reasonably have expected them to go.

MRS. HARRINGTON. You compared just now the transition from Greek to Hebrew thought to passing from the open downs into the interior of a church. I want to know to what you liken the change from Greek to Hindu thought, both being examples of Indo-Germanic speculation.

TREVOR. You have asked a question on that precise point of our present theme which seems to me most interesting. Without anticipating my fuller treatment, I may say that the passing from Hellenic to Hindu thought is like the transition from our downs to the close, enervating atmosphere of a hothouse; or, reverting to the real state of the matter, it is like passing suddenly from the clear air and transparent skies of Greece to the low, hot, mist-covered plains of South India. . . . In both you have a supreme effort of subtle daring speculation, but with the Greek the extreme point reached is Pyrrhonism or suspense, with the Hindu it is mystic self-annihilation. Both are Skeptical extremes, one in the direction of activity, the other in that of passivity. The aims of the two classes of thinkers, as well as the characteristics of their thought, seem to me well marked in the contrast between the *ἀταραξία* of the Greek and the self-absorption or Nirvana of the Hindu.

MISS LEYCESTER. We have now an opportunity of ascertaining how far philosophical thought is a product of certain races and of geographical conditions. . . . I can understand how the broad plains of India, with their dim horizons, should beget an idea of infinity and profundity, and how their sweltering sunshine and the depressed vitality it must produce should lead to pessimism.

ARUNDEL. I should rather ascribe the inscrutable nature of their philosophical systems to a mysterious connection with their jungles: both are equally wild and equally impenetrable.

TREVOR. You might have added 'overgrown,' so far as the productive power of Hindu thought is concerned. But your simile is inaccurate, for the obstructions you meet with in jungles are real, dense, and palpable, whereas nothing can exceed the extreme tenuity of Hindu metaphysical conceptions. Their thinkers will seize a purely transcendental idea or apperception, and will divide and subdivide it into yet more rarefied fragments, while each of these is submitted to a still more subtle discrimination, until we are landed in abstractions or supposed entities so ineffably impalpable, as to make us stand aghast at the subtlety that could conceive and classify them. The logical divisions and ideas of the Schoolmen are sufficiently immaterial and hard to grasp. The creations and definitions of German transcendentalists are still less easily apprehended, but the most attenuated of either of these is a gross material conception compared with the 'airy nothings' of Hindu thinkers.

HARRINGTON. All such sublimating exercitations remind me of an expressive Yankee phrase, 'Whittling the thin end of nothing.' Hindus are excellent jugglers, and I suspect they carry their sleight of hand, or rather of thought, into intellectual ideas, and feign rarefied conceptions which they are far from clearly grasping.

MISS LEYCESTER. I can't see why we should assume that, and I demur to the criticism that is based on the complete uniformity and coextensiveness of all mental faculties. Why should there not be the same difference in the reach by extension or profundity of metaphysical powers as we undoubtedly possess in our physical senses? I remember, when I went to Switzerland with some friends a few years since, I entirely failed to catch the shrill note of the grasshoppers in the pine forests, which nevertheless was perfectly audible to several of my fellow-travellers; and I suppose few people ever hear the scream of the bat.

Because we cannot grasp transcendental ideas after they have passed a certain limit of tenuity, that is surely no reason why other thinkers, as *e.g.* Hindus, may not be able to do so. In ascending very high mountains and contending with a gradual increase of atmospheric rarity, one explorer can get far beyond another by, I suppose, superior lung-power. Why may there not be a corresponding difference in spiritual apperception?

ARUNDEL. I suspect, Miss Leycester, you have suggested the reason for the variety of opinions that exist among Western *savants* as to ideas which are familiar commonplaces in Hindu thought. To mention one instance: take the case of Nirvana, and the various interpretations of that sublime condition. Really to appreciate a mystic absorption which borders so closely on annihilation that we are unable to discriminate between them, requires a Hindu intellect and Hindu training.

TREVOR. The full implication of Miss Leycester's argument goes beyond that; in reality it is a plea for the complete individualism which is the logical outcome of all Skeptical inquiry, and which cuts at the root of all metaphysical and philosophical systems. Once grant that every man's intellectual reach, like other elements of his personality, is different from that of all his fellow-men, and the promulgation of a system of belief equally binding on all is the most transparent of absurdities.

ARUNDEL. Your deduction, Doctor, goes considerably beyond the ground covered by your premisses. Assuming the difference Miss Leycester contends for exists, and that the metaphysical insight differs in every case, just as *e.g.* the physical eyesight is held to vary, there would still be left ample material in the shape of common and indubitable truths for the formation of a system of belief binding on all reasonable men. For the differences between one man and another do not affect things clearly within the knowledge of each, but only distant objects and horizons.

TREVOR. True, but every man's intellectual tableau, like a landscape painting, must have its boundaries and

horizons, whether well defined or not. Similarly every system of faith or knowledge must have not merely rudimentary and acknowledged elements, but also remote conclusions and far-reaching implications. In harmonizing completely the man with the system there should be an entire agreement between these boundaries, which, even if it existed, could never be a matter of demonstration.

HARRINGTON. Pardon me, Doctor, but your theories, both of the individual's mental tableau and of the inherent completeness of any system, are purely ideal. A man's mind is not that complete picture you seem to assume, nor do the systems on which he brings it to bear possess that entirety needed to justify your Skeptical inference. A man generally accepts not the whole of a system, but merely a fractional part, 'be the same less or more,' as lawyers phrase it. An Eclectic, *e.g.* neatly pieces together a kind of intellectual mosaic from fragments of many, and these not always congruent, systems. Nor, again, are these systems themselves regarded as aggregates so firmly soldered together that you cannot accept a portion without swallowing the whole. Consequently, your plea for unlimited individualism fails in theory, as we know all attempts in a similar direction have failed in practice.

MISS LEYCESTER. But you do not dispute my position, that there may be differences in metaphysical powers between different races or individuals?

HARRINGTON. No, I do not. I regard the notion as extremely probable. Only we must not push it so far as to make every man's mind in all its parts and functions perfectly unique. That would be a misconception which, however useful to Skeptics, is absolutely disproved by human history, and by our every-day experience of social life.

TREVOR. You estimate truth from the point of view of human experience; I, having learnt the fallacy of experience as a test of absolute truth, am inclined to take an ideal or theoretic standpoint for its contemplation. Meanwhile we must not lose sight, in our unimportant divergences, of the more momentous theme we mean to discuss.

. . . I will therefore begin my paper on Hebrew and Hindu Skepticism.

. . . . . .

I. *Hebrew Skepticism.*

Skepticism being a method or, as some would call it, a degree or stage of speculation, it is obvious that it must be limited by the horizon of the ideas and mental characteristics of those who pursue it. Now the general idiosyncrasy or genius of the Hebrews, in common with the other branches of the Semitic race, is (as we have seen) religious, devout, and uninquiring.[1] We might therefore determine the nature of their Skepticism beforehand, and predict its limitation to theology. Accordingly we find that the unbelief of the Hebrews is only partial or occasional; that it is entirely unconnected with general knowledge, with philosophy, or science in the ordinary meaning of the words, and is applied exclusively to theological and kindred subjects. We with our Aryan tendencies find it difficult to conceive the mental condition which generally characterizes the Hebrews in the earlier stages of their development. The careless passivity which accepts theories and dogmas without an attempt to ascertain their value appears to savour of mental indolence. The serene incuriosity which takes little heed of secular knowledge as a subject of independent investigation seems akin to intellectual vacuity. The Greek loved to explore the wondrous material world in which he was placed, to evolve existing phenomena from physical or partially physical antecedents. The Hebrew, with a childlike sense of impotence and dependence, was content to ascribe to Jahve or Elohim the whole sum and order of the universe, and to ask no further. While the Greek investigated the laws of language, and by his inquiries contributed to the wondrous fulness and plasticity of the Hellenic tongue, the Hebrew indicated by his vocabulary the few diversities of speech of which in his limited scope he had need, and confined himself to terms required by his religion or his ordinary wants. While the Greek loved to trace in the methods of Dialectic or systems of philosophy the processes of his reason, the Hebrew contented himself with intuitional affirmations of truth. While the Hellene manifested an insatiable curiosity as to the manners and beliefs of foreign peoples, the thought of the Hebrew, like his country, was bounded by Dan and Beersheba. While the Greek

[1] Comp. on this point Renan's *Langues Sémitiques*, 2nd ed. p. 3, and *passim*.

pushed his daring Skepticism to an excess which occasionally refuted its own extravagance, the Hebrew betrayed only an occasional doubt or mistrust of a portion of his creed, his general reliance on the evidence of his senses or the operation of his intellect being as complete and undoubting as that of a child. What in the Greek, therefore, was a subjective consciousness, the source of his mental independence, the criterion of all truth, was in the Hebrew a purely religious faculty, a conscience that confined its verdicts to the devotional or ethical aspects of his faith. In short, with the Greek man's reason was in immediate contact with the problems of the universe, and the chief point at issue was his own knowledge. With the Jew, on the other hand, man was in direct connection with God, and the main question related to his spiritual welfare. Thus Hebrew thought as an instrument of culture suffered, as was indeed inevitable, from its excellence as a guide to religion. For whatever other attributes it possesses, it lacks the spirit of curiosity and inquiry which are the primary impulses to knowledge, and as a collateral defect it is also devoid of the largeness of view which results from the broadening of the field of intelligence. How far this apathy on philosophical subjects may be attributed, as M. Renan thinks,[1] to Jewish monotheism, may well be a matter of doubt, inasmuch as the exclusive devotion of the Jews to monotheism during their earlier history has itself become questionable. I should rather ascribe it to the general characteristics of their creed, education, and religious history, and in a minor degree perhaps to inherent mental tendencies peculiar to Semitic races. But whatever the cause, the effect is indubitable. The old Jews cherished a sublime indifference to human knowledge and inquiry of every kind, so that if ignorance and incuriosity be, as some Skeptical writers affirm, the highest mental excellence, they may be found in their pristine purity in the earlier records of the Old Testament.

There are perhaps four stages or phases into which Hebrew Skepticism may be divided.

I. The first is marked by the occasional expressions of discontent and inquiry which we find in the Psalms and historical books of the Old Testament. These we may collectively denominate the tentative stage of Hebrew Skepticism. It occupies the greater portion of Jewish history, and prepares the way for the formal dissent from national beliefs which we find in the books of Job and Ecclesiastes. The incidental marks of unbelief and dissatisfaction which pertain to this stage take their rise from ruling ideas of the Jewish theocracy. They refer (1) to the relation of Jahve with

[1] *Les Langues Sémitiques*, p. 5. Comp. Lassen, *Ind. Alterthums*, I. p. 494.

the gods of neighbouring nations, (2) to the doctrines of providence and retribution, (3) to the non-existence of a future state.

(1) The relation in which the national Jahve of the Jews was conceived to stand to the universe as its sole Maker and Ruler, of itself imported difficulties into their theology, for there immediately arose the question as to His dealings with other than the chosen people. 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' was a conviction necessarily springing from this conception of the universal sway of Jahve, and the moral rectitude and purity ascribed to Him, but was not easily reconciled with the favouritism which was the real basis of the national theocracy. The attempts made to harmonize what are in truth incompatible ideas constitute the first stage in Jewish Skeptical thought. No amount of astute reasoning could bring the limits of the universe within the boundaries of Palestine, nor make the position of so many populous nations and countries outside the pale of their common Creator's beneficence reconcilable with ordinary notions of justice. The common mode of harmonizing these divergent ideas was this: the ground of the Divine favour was transferred from national to moral qualities, but even then the assumption remained that the pure worship of Jahve and the complete observance of His laws were confined to the true Israel. Indeed the employment of some such conception on the part of Jewish legislators and prophets was necessitated by the various forms of idol-worship practised by surrounding nations, and with which the Jews themselves evinced no small sympathy. The attempts of Moses and the succession of prophets from Samuel onwards to confine their fealty to their own unseen Jahve were not always attended by success. After the settlement in Canaan, large portions of the nation, especially the northern tribes, were in a chronic state of hesitation as to the object of their worship. It is noteworthy that the only examples furnished by the Hebrew records of actual suspense and of something like national doubt is the halting between rival deities with which Joshua and Elijah reproach them.[1] The motives for this easy transference of their allegiance from one deity to another are not to be sought in any intellectual research into the being and attributes of the different gods, and a comparative estimate of the superiority of one above the rest. As a nation the Jews were largely influenced in their worship by the material consideration of good and evil, of profit and loss, which lay at the basis of all their ethics and religion. The deity who conferred upon them the greatest amount of temporal and national blessings they regarded as having the highest claim on their worship, and it

[1] Joshua xxiv. 15; 1 Kings xviii. 21.

is observable that every state of adversity or privation immediately incited them to idolatry. The national Skepticism or suspense which thus vacillated between Jahve on the one side and Baal on the other, was therefore a kind of commercial feeling determined primarily by temporal advantage, though doubtless the prophets and spiritual leaders of the nation were dominated by far other motives and aspirations.

(2) But besides this wholesale distrust of their national religion and Deity which occupies such a large portion of Jewish history, we find traces of another kind of Skepticism more insidious and profound as well as more dependent on the exercise of their intellectual powers—I mean the reasoned uncertainty of some of their thinkers as to current theories of providence and retribution. The theocratic notion of Providence implied a peculiar guardianship over the interests of His own chosen people, accompanied by a corresponding disregard of the concerns of all other nations and races. In the ethical universalizing of this idea it became tantamount to a conviction that God would reward the righteous and punish the wicked. Hence the usual marks of prosperity were accepted as evidence of the goodwill and pleasure of God, while on the contrary adversity in every form was an unequivocal sign of His displeasure. Now to the reflective Jew the reconciliation of such a theory with the general laws of the universe, or with the workings of Providence within the narrower sphere of his personal experience, must have been a task of considerable difficulty; nor can we be surprised at occasional admissions of inability to accomplish it. He could not shut his eyes to the fact that his ideal Providence, who made a distinction between Jew and Gentile, who theoretically awarded blessings to the just and adversity to the unjust, was sometimes guilty of painful and embarrassing impartiality. He might have employed Clough's words—

> Seeing He visits still
> With equalest apportionment of ill
> Both good and bad alike, and brings to one same dust
> Both unjust and the just.

Certainly there was not that distinction in the physical conditions of existence nor in the ordinary elements of human happiness between Jews and Gentiles which would have warranted a belief in the theory that each was governed by a different code of providential dealing. Nor among Jews themselves was the happiness of the righteous and the misery of the wicked a rule without exception. But if these eccentricities in the Divine dealings were

admitted, what became of the primary idea of the theocracy? Not only Judaism but morality itself seemed imperilled by the assumption of a Deity who 'made His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sent rain on the just and the unjust.'

This is the stage of Jewish Skepticism which meets us in the thirty-seventh and seventy-third Psalms, and still more fully in the Book of Job. The intellect of the nation, its extended observation and enlarged experience, come in conflict with its devotional spirit and its religious acquiescence. The Jew begins, in short, to think for himself. True, the effort is at first not very persistent, nor its outcome very great. Still it is an undoubted attempt to compare the facts of the universe with his own traditional orthodoxy, and every such effort has in it the germs of mental progress. As a result of this investigation, he finds many an instance of that anomaly—the prosperous wicked man. It appears to him that so far from being under the ban of Providence, as his creed and his own moral instincts would suggest, these ungodly men enjoy an exceptional immunity from the troubles of life. Notwithstanding their practical Atheism, they prosper in the world and increase in riches. The Psalmist is even tempted to ask what is the use of his purer life: 'Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain and washed my hands in innocency.'

We may observe that the form which this Skepticism takes is irritation or spleen, partly against the ungodly who falsifies the fundamental conception of Judaism, partly against the Providence which permits such a flagrant violation of His general law. But the sentiment is emotional, not intellectual. Where a Greek, *e.g.* would have distrusted a theory so irreconcilable with patent facts, the Hebrew distrusts the correctness in that particular instance of his own impressions. The final solution of the difficulty is also intensely Hebraic. There is no dallying, as an Hellenic thinker might have attempted, with the opposing horns of a dilemma, no endeavour, as by a modern philosopher, to find an indifference-point in which the antagonisms might be merged. The Hebrew goes into the sanctuary of God, and then he understands—in other words, by religious exercises, by an imperious demand on that profound faith which forms the distinguishing mark of his race, he overcomes and tramples down his doubts. As a result, he acquires the pious conviction that the prosperity of the wicked is only a temporary phenomenon. God does not forsake His own. Notwithstanding all appearances to the contrary, virtue is finally triumphant, and vice punished. The Psalmist has been young and now is old, yet never did he see the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging

their bread. Thus the momentary unbelief of these Semitic Free-thinkers is remedied by a return to the traditional faith. Finally and definitively the old truth still remains—probably in the glow of religious feeling invested with new force and significance on account of the very Skepticism that threatened its existence—that Providence looks with an especial eye of favour upon His people, and with a no less distinctly marked glance of disfavour on those who are not of Abraham's seed nor of his religious faith.

(3) The bearing of the Jewish doctrine of temporal rewards and punishments upon their conceptions of a future life is obvious. It induced if not an active disbelief yet a very pronounced doubt in the existence of any world beyond the grave. Death, in fact, with its ruthless impartiality furnished to the Jew another source of unbelief in the providential government of the world. He saw that wise men also died as well as the ignorant and brutish, and left their riches for others. As to any state of retribution after the present life, that was clearly superfluous when life itself was in his opinion so distinctly retributive, and when every human act was immediately awarded the Divine favour or disfavour. Hence, though in subsequent Jewish history the express denial of a future state was associated with the Skeptical sect of the Sadducees, yet throughout the whole of the Old Testament there is a preponderance of evidence to show that a similar though less distinctly avouched disbelief characterized the Jews generally. But its precise nature and limits is a question which we need not, for our present purpose, investigate.

II.

The second stage of Hebrew Skepticism is presented to us by the Book of Job. Here we have disbelief in current theories of providence, retribution, &c., asserted in a manner at once forcible and extreme. The problem on which the national intellect had expended its energies for centuries is stated for the first time in its fullest and most circumstantial manner, and no longer in vague generalities or incidental expressions. To add to its interest, it is conceived in a lively dramatic form, the action of the Hebrew Jahve in a supposed case of human oppression being canvassed like the operation of Fate in the 'Oidipous' of Sophokles, or the conduct of Zeus in the 'Prometheus' of Aischylos. It is true the plot is not elaborate. The characters are few in number. The evolution of the drama is of the simplest possible kind, and its *dénoûment* only re-establishes the belief which its *motif* seems to assail. Nevertheless, during its progress there is manifested a considerable

amount of acute reasoning on the moral problems of the universe. The popular conceptions of Hebrew theology are submitted to a free examination, its centre dogma of the ideal union of piety and prosperity being investigated with fearlessness and unreserve. For the time being the typical Hebrew, so far as represented by Job, throws off his customary religious reverence and submission. He enters with his Maker into an Eristic equally bold and candid; he contends with Jahve as Moses spake with God—face to face.

The argument of the book is too well known to need detailed exposition. Job is the Hebrew Prometheus, the victim of the Satanic malignity which has persuaded the Supreme Being to consent to his temporal ruin. No doubt the declared object of this permission is the trial of Job's faith, in which Jahve places a more unbounded confidence than the result would seem to justify. This cause of his trouble, so honourable to himself, at once secures him the sympathies of the reader, who perceives that Job in his innocence and perfect rectitude of character is the victim of an unhallowed confederation between God and Satan. It is necessary to remember this in order to allow for the boldness of Job's expostulation with Jahve. He accordingly suffers one by one all the calamities which diabolical malevolence can hurl against him, the saving of his life under such circumstances being really an addition to his misery. A more absolute contradiction to the ideal union of moral rectitude and worldly prosperity it would be quite impossible to imagine, and the test to which the Jewish dogma is exposed is thus one of the severest kind. Job feels his miseries acutely, he bemoans his fate, curses the day of his birth, resents the cruel and arbitrary conduct of Jahve, protests vehemently his own innocence. Reasoning from the eccentricity in the dealings of Providence which he has experienced, as well as from similar facts in other cases, the moral problems of the universe present to him the aspect of inscrutable enigmas. Good and bad, innocent and guilty, seem to suffer the same troubles, and to be awarded the same fate. The will of the Eternal is not that mobile, vacillating thing which the Hebrews suppose. The old theocratic hypothesis for the time appears a myth. Nevertheless, Job does not wholly renounce it. His mind is a centre of conflicting hopes and fears. In some of his lucid intervals he still looks forward to a solution of the enigma which puzzles and oppresses him. A well-known passage expresses not only his hope of a vindication of his innocence, but a confident expectation that he will live to see it. 'He knows that his avenger liveth, and that ultimately he will stand up for him on the earth. But the general tone of his thought is one of mingled bitterness

and desperation. In these moods his language is marked by extreme vehemence. With a sublime self-assertion he does not scruple to defy Jahve and even to dare the utmost exercise of His power.[1] This, *e.g.* is one of his outbursts. Addressing his friends, he says (chap. xiii. 13–15):

> Be silent! let me alone that I may speak,
> And let happen to me what will;
> Why do I take my flesh in my teeth
> And put my life in my hand?
> Though He slay me I care not,[2]
> But I will maintain my ways before Him.

And in another place, addressing Jahve Himself, he thus expostulates:

> If I have sinned against Thee, O spy of mankind,
> Why hast Thou made me the butt of Thy shafts?
> Why am I become a burden to myself?
>
> Why hast Thou not blotted out my sins,
> And caused to disappear my transgression?
>
> For soon I shall lie down in the dust—
> Thou wilt seek me, but I shall be no more.

Although not quite equalling, this language of Job's closely approximates to the magnificent defiance which Prometheus hurls

[1] Ewald's remarks on this relation of Job to Jahve are worth quotation: 'Zwar bewährt sich nun gerade hier am glänzendsten und überraschendsten die unermessliche Macht des guten Bewusstseyns und die unbeugbare Kraft der Unschuld: ist alles auf Erden verloren und alles gegenwärtige vernichtet, scheint sogar der alte äussere Gott zu fehlen und aufgegeben werden zu müssen: so kann die Unschuld mit ihrem klaren Bewusstseyn doch nie weder sich selbst noch den ewigen nothwendigen innern Gott aufgeben, sondern erhebt sich alle Zukunft überschauend desto kühner mit nie geahneter Gewalt jemehr man ihr die wahren Güter, ihr Bewusstseyn mit dem ewigen göttlichen selbst zusammenzuhangen und ihr darauf gestütztes unendliches Vertrauen, gewaltsam rauben will,' &c.—*Das Buch. Ijob*, p. 169.

[2] This is the most idiomatic rendering of the Hebrew words, which literally imply the surrender of all hope in Jahve. Ewald translates, 'Ich hoffe nicht,' and Renan, 'J'ai perdu tout espoir.' The language is that of desperation passing into indifference.

against Zeus.[1] Both the Titan and the Hebrew are alike in challenging the extremest hostility of their oppressors, but there is this difference between them, that Job still retains a reserve of trust in Jahve, or rather in the eternal truth and rectitude which he identifies with Him, whereas Prometheus altogether distrusts and abhors Zeus as an unjust and immoral tyrant. Hence Job's defiance, notwithstanding its bitter and reckless language, is in the highest sense of the term religious. It is an example of what has been called the 'ethical sublime.' Job's standpoint is expressed in the following passage:—

> Were it Jahve's will at last to crush me,
> Were he to stretch forth His hand and cut me off,
> Even from hence would spring forth my trust,
> On which I lean in all my deepest sorrow:
> Ne'er have I transgressed the word of the Holy.

In connection with this indomitable sense of rectitude, which sustains Job in all his troubles and makes him half indifferent to the goodwill even of Jahve himself, is his sturdy refusal to confess sins of which he does not feel himself guilty. The doctrine that physical calamity infers moral turpitude he rejects with contempt, while the endeavour of his friends to force on him a sense of guilt in order, *more Hebraico*,

> To justify the ways of God to man,

he characterizes as lying for God.

> God forbid that I should justify you,
> Till death I will not renounce my integrity,
> My righteousness I cling to and will not let it go,
> My conscience shall not prick me as long as I live.

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[1] *Prom. Vinct.* 1013, ed. Paley. Comp. also vv. 1023–1027.

> πρὸς ταῦτα ῥιπτέσθω μὲν αἰθαλοῦσσα φλὸξ,
> λευκοπτέρῳ δὲ νιφάδι καὶ βροντήμασι
> χθονίοις κυκάτω πάντα καὶ ταρασσέτω·
> γνάψει γὰρ οὐδὲν τῶνδέ μ' . . .

A similar defiance of an Olympian deity in the interests of morality is also contained in the *Hippolytus* of Euripides. The most illustrious example which modern history contains of a like self-assertion in opposition to the tenets of an immoral creed is John Stuart Mill's well-known determination to refuse, under the extremest penalties, to worship any Being who did not represent to him the highest human morality.

He confesses that if he were conscious of wickedness the case would be different.

> If I be wicked, woe unto me;
> If I be righteous, shall I not lift up my head?[1]

That Jahve has boundless power Job is quite ready to admit, but that does not seem to him to sanction a wayward and capricious, still less a mischievous, use of it. On the contrary, the possession of great power ought to produce a considerate employment of it as against human weakness, and it is because this principle of justice has been violated in his own case that he feels compelled to use such freedom of language to Jahve. We hence see how thoroughly Job asserted the instincts of humanity as against the requirements of theology, how determined he was to vindicate the rights of himself and his fellow-men against any wanton infringement even at the hands of God. So far, therefore, as an invincible sense of independence is a characteristic of a Skeptic, Job possessed no inconsiderable share of Skepticism. Nor does he evince any defective sense of individualism and self-assertion as regards his fellow-men. Here also he manifests a Skeptical disposition. His main position in the drama is that he is an isolated defender against some odds of a heterodox position. But the consensus of general opinion which his friends urge against him has no other effect than to provoke ridicule of their arguments and the dogmatic temper in which they are urged. Thus he addresses them:—

> No doubt ye are the men,
> And wisdom shall die with you;
>
> But I have understanding as well as you,
> I am not inferior to yourselves;
> Yea, who knoweth not such things as these?[2]
>
> What ye know, that know I also,
> I am not inferior unto you.[3]

Thus Job represents Hebrew Skepticism generated by reflection and by the free play of ordinary human instincts, clashing with Dogma on the very point where the Jewish conviction was strongest. His three friends may be regarded as the advocates for the commonly accepted creed. As Job is the typical Hebrew Skeptic, so Eliphaz,

[1] Chap. x. 15. Here, as often elsewhere, the language of our Authorized Version completely inverts the terms in which Job gives vent to his ethical exasperation.

[2] Chap. xii. 1, 2.

[3] Chap. xiii. 2.

Bildad, and Zophar are Dogmatists. They represent the prevalent beliefs of the nation. The extreme readiness with which they infer moral culpability from adverse circumstances would be almost ludicrous if it did not testify to the strength of Hebrew prejudice on the point. For the greater portion of the poem Job remains in complete suspense. He still feels a lingering affection for the old theory which connected temporal prosperity with religious and moral rectitude; at the same time, he will not renounce his faith in his own innocence. There is therefore a conflict between conscience and human instincts on the one hand, and dogma and religious tradition on the other, which sometimes passes into desperation and absolute pessimism.

At last the Eternal Himself interposes to solve what is an undoubted *dignus vindice nodus*. But the solution is in point of fact only a reaffirmation of the problem. In two chapters of sublime poetry Jahve proclaims His infinite power: He vindicates His laws by asserting their wisdom and necessity, and deprecates human research by declaring its incompetence. However, Job's suspense between conscience and dogma is defended, and the conduct of his friends in inferring his guilt from his misfortunes is reproved. Skepticism is thus not only triumphant in the person of its great representative, but receives a direct sanction from the words attributed to the Eternal. Knowledge is thus affirmed not to be that easy possession which Job's dogmatic friends had deemed it, and the highest attitude a man can adopt in presence of the inscrutable enigmas of the world is pronounced to be confessed ignorance.

But the drama, notwithstanding Job's recalcitrant Skepticism, ends by reaffirming the doctrine questioned. Job is reinstated in all his original possessions. He has restored to him his children, his flocks, and herds, his men and maid servants, all the various kinds of material prosperity which were the accepted guarantees of the Divine favour. Thus his trials become only an episode in his life. His legitimate condition as a wealthy righteous man terminates as it began his existence; and whatever the effect of Job's sturdy independence, his arraignment of Jahve, his vehement declaration of the rights of conscience and humanity, the end of the story could only have tended to confirm the Jews in their ancient beliefs. We may observe also that Job arrives exactly at the same conclusion as the Skeptical Psalms, the thirty-seventh and seventy-third, in both of which occasional aberrations from the usual course of Providence, with regard to the conditions of the righteous and the wicked, are declared to be possible, though they are not permanent. Sooner or later the prosperous

wicked are duly punished, and the suffering righteous are made happy.

The Book of Job, therefore, so far as it was intended as a protest against a theory of Divine Providence difficult to harmonize with human experience, must be pronounced ineffective. Yet the spirit of the book and its very striking qualities were not likely to be lost. Undoubtedly it was an enormous advance on any prior stage of Jewish thought. The date of the book is a moot question, on which I do not feel competent to enter, but it was evidently written after a period during which there had been a large influx of foreign elements into Judaism, and the free tone and mental independence of the work are not less conspicuous indications of its origin than the numerous Aramaic words and forms of expression which it contains. Indeed, both the basis and method of its speculation are altogether alien to theocratic modes of thought. Its conception of Deity, of the universe, of providence, of history, exhibit a stage of Hebrew theology when the sacred privileges of nationality, descent from Abraham, exclusive enjoyment of Divine guidance and protection, the temple worship at Jerusalem, &c. are all lost sight of. A still more striking divergence from Judaism is indicated by the self-assertion of Job. In his reasoning, though it be intuitive rather than deductive, and spasmodic than continuous, we have the spectacle of a single individual conscience arraigned against the creed of his nation and his friends. Personal experience is accepted as being to every man the final test of the workings of God's laws. Job thus manifests a well-marked individualism which elevates him above the level of his nation, and brings him into juxtaposition with such men as Sokrates and Descartes. Certainly the former in his pleadings before the Dikastery at Athens does not evince a fuller, albeit perhaps a more tranquil and serene, consciousness of his own integrity than does Job in his arguments with his friends; and Descartes discovering the solution of his philosophic doubt in the verdict of consciousness finds a parallel in the man of Uz, and his immovable stand on the moral assurance of his conscience, from which impregnable fortress he is prepared to defy his friends, his religion, and even his God. The Skeptical tenor of much of Job's utterances cannot be said to be affected by the *dénoûment* of the drama, and by his reinstation in his former wealth. Like the extreme shifts we occasionally find in fiction, this was too violent and unnatural, too distinctly a sacrifice to a foregone conclusion, to impress any but those who were already wedded to the Jewish theory of Providence. Hence, in relation to Hebrew

Dogma, the book must be pronounced Skeptical. Given as data, the Jewish conception of the rule of Providence, and the experience of every man of the actual operation of that rule, and we cannot say that either the Dogmatism of the three friends or the Skepticism of Job has succeeded in harmonizing the divergent ideas. The words of the Eternal only affirm human impotence and ignorance in presence of the great questions of the universe, and so far justify a suspensive attitude in relation to all dogmas which claim to determine them.

III.

Proceeding in order of thought, possibly also of time, we reach a third stage of Hebrew Skepticism, that which affirms consciously and deliberately that all knowledge is hurtful, and that the highest ideal of human blessedness is to be found in complete and unqualified ignorance. No doubt this conviction pervades more or less unwittingly all early Hebrew thought, but the peculiarity of the stage of which I am now speaking is that the bliss of ignorance becomes openly and freely admitted, and receives the fullest possible imprimatur at the hands of God Himself. Now such a conclusion, avouched with all possible solemnity and regarded as a Divine revelation, seems to me to presuppose some preliminary examination into the nature and grounds of knowledge, as well as into its general effect on investigators. 'He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow' is a proposition which, whether true or untrue, could have only been adopted after some experience of the effects of increasing knowledge. This phase of Hebrew thought comes before us in the beautiful legend of the Fall contained in the third chapter of Genesis. In this well-known story, which I may incidentally observe I here consider exclusively from the point of view of a philosopher, there are certain features which seem to make its position in sequence of thought to the phase we have just examined in the Book of Job. Here it is not one or more alleged facts in the government of the universe that is called in question, but the validity or usefulness of all human knowledge whatever. The condition deprecated by Job, of complete insensibility, as the only one which could justify Jahve's severe trials,[1] is declared in the story of Genesis to be man's original state. Paradise is represented as a condition of complete ignorance, a garden in which the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is expressly forbidden; and when Adam, the representative of the race, is tempted by the delights

[1] Comp. Job vi. 12; xiii. 25.

of knowledge to transgress the command, he is declared to have brought disaster and ruin both on himself and his posterity. So far then as we may regard this narrative as revealing a phase of Jewish thought, it clearly manifests a profound distrust of knowledge in its bearing on human happiness.[1] That death should be the threatened penalty of investigation into good and evil certainly denotes an hostility to knowledge far transcending ordinary forms of Skepticism.

On this point the contrast between Hebrew thought on the one hand, and Hindu and Greek philosophy on the other, is very striking. With all his passive tendencies the Hindu cherishes knowledge, delights in the unimpeded exercise of his intellectual faculties. His culminating perfection of Nirvana is only attained through and by means of knowledge. No doubt he is quite aware of the disadvantages, restrictions, and disappointments that beset the path of the truth-seeker, and his consciousness of those drawbacks assumes occasionally the form of pessimism, but he is seldom tempted to proclaim knowledge itself as a curse. The contrast between Hebrew and Greek ideas is still more striking. It will be best estimated by a brief comparison of the narrative of the fall with the fable of Prometheus, the latter being taken in the mature form presented by the sublime drama of Aischylos. The close relation existing between these two legends has been often noted,[2] but not perhaps from the point of view belonging to our subject. A comparison of their similarities and dissimilarities will throw considerable light on the phase of Hebrew Skepticism we are now examining. We shall thereby learn the diverse idiosyncrasies of the two races, and we shall discover how early in the general history of humanity the painful experience was acquired that increase of knowledge means increase of sorrow. In the Bible narrative, man's primary condition is that of innocence and

[1] It seems that this idea was common also to other Chaldæan narratives of the creation, &c. of man. Thus we read in the newly discovered tablets of cuneiform inscriptions—

> v. 16. He like me also, Hea may he punish him.
> v. 22. Wisdom and knowledge hostilely may they injure him.

Smith, *Chaldæan Account of Genesis*, p. 84; cf. p. 88. See also the same author's account of the effects of the Fall, pp. 91, 92.

[2] Comp. *e.g.* Welcker's *Prometheus*, p. 73, &c. Prof. Blackie remarks, in his paper *On the Prometheus Bound of Æschylus* (*Classical Museum*, vol. v. p. 41, note), 'that the sin of Adam in Gen. iii. and the sin of Prometheus in Hesiod and Æschylus, however they may differ in form and in effect, are in conception and principle substantially the same.'

ignorance—indeed, the former is made to depend entirely on the latter. As another result of his ignorance, he is supremely happy. In the Aischylean drama, man, before the Promethean enlightenment, is also ignorant, but on account of that ignorance his condition is intensely miserable. Instead of being under the direct guardianship of God and in the enjoyment of a paradise where all his material wants are cared for, he is represented as hardly above the level of the brutes. Hence the first contact with knowledge as an independent possession was conceived by the Jew in the form of a temptation and a fall—a sudden and irrevocable deterioration, while to the Greek it was a starting-point in the path of progress. Both the Hebrew and Greek writers agree that the agency which produced this stupendous change in the lot of humanity was supernatural. The serpent in Genesis was probably in early Jewish legend, as undoubtedly in later, identified with the fallen archangel; and the Titan Prometheus was confessedly related to the ruling dynasty of Olympus. Both narratives too are alike in their motive: Prometheus steals heavenly fire in order to assimilate men to God, and the serpent promises that after eating the forbidden fruit man should become 'as God, knowing good and evil.' It may be added that the serpent's prophecy is verified by the express admission of God Himself, whereas the Divine threat of death as the direct consequence of eating the fruit remains unaccomplished. Thus both the serpent in Genesis and Prometheus in Greek legend are supposed to be endued with powers of foresight greater than those of the Hebrew God on the one hand or Olympian Zeus on the other. Both stories agree that the enlightenment of humanity was accomplished against the will and intention of the Supreme Being, though in the Hebrew narrative the intention was supposed to be beneficent, whereas in the Greek mythos it was clearly hostile. Both further agree that the event which in either case resulted in the enlightenment of humanity imparted a new impulse and direction to man's activity; but the former makes the new energy consist in a warfare with nature, which assumes in consequence of man's fall an attitude of direct hostility towards him, whereas the quickened energy that ensued on the Promethean theft consists in the subjugation of natural forces, which henceforward become obedient vassals of human needs.[1] Lastly, there is on both sides a 'set-off' to the evil and good respectively that resulted to humanity from the thefts of Prometheus and Adam. For if in the Greek legend man

[1] This idea has been extended and modernized by Shelley in a passage of matchless beauty—*Prometheus Unbound*, act ii. scene iv. Cf. also the 'Chorus of Spirits' in the same drama, act iv.

by the possession of celestial fire was able to contemplate his fate undismayed, as well as to advance in the arts of social life, there was the drawback that he was perpetually swayed by unrealized hopes.[1] On the other hand, if after the theft of the apple man was expelled from paradise, there remained the compensation that he had attained, by the admission of God Himself, the Divine capacity of discriminating between good and evil. I will only suggest as another *possible* correspondence between the two, that the passage in Genesis which speaks of the mutual relation of the seed of the serpent and that of the woman, with a stress upon the *head* of the former and the *heel* of the latter, may perhaps refer to the prospective and retrospective aspects of human knowledge as they are represented in Greek legend under the form of Prometheus and Epimetheus.

We are now able with the aid of the illustration supplied by the Promethean fable to determine the nature of Hebrew opinion in one part of its history on the subject of knowledge. We perceive that it evinces a decided suspicion of the value of human knowledge even of an elementary kind. The golden age of humanity is portrayed as a condition of childishness in which it is hard to say whether ignorance, innocence, or helplessness is most predominant. The supreme excellence of human attainment is declared to be Nescience, and the maturity of the world is to be sought for in its cradle. Under the circumstances, reason becomes a superfluous faculty, having no field in which to exercise its energies, and no motive for their exercise. The single feature which assimilates the ideal state of man in Paradise with his actual condition in the world is that some portion of free volition is still left him.

As a dream of poetry or picturesque legend the narrative may hold a high place; as an accurate representation of man's highest state in nature or among his fellows, it must be pronounced grotesquely unreal. It evinces too strong a leaning to the prejudice that human excellence depends on imbecility. From the aggregate of human virtues it thus abstracts the ideas of courage, independ-

[1] *Prom. Vinct.* line 256, ed. Paley.

ΠΡ. θνητούς γ' ἔπαυσα μὴ προδέρκεσθαι μόρον.
ΧΟ. τὸ ποῖον εὑρὼν τῆσδε φάρμακον νόσου.
ΠΡ. τυφλὰς ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐλπίδας κατῴκισα.

It was of this passage that Shelley was thinking when he wrote the reproach of the Furies to Prometheus:

'Dost thou boast the clear knowledge thou waken'dst for man,' &c

Prom. Unbound, act i.

ence, rationality, steadfastness, and manliness. Nor is the parable of the Fall uninstructive in the exposition it offers of the relation of the Supreme Being to man and his knowledge. God is represented in the light of a weak parent, who, in order to prevent contamination to his child, refuses to send it to school, and allows it to grow up in ignorance under the paternal roof. Such a conception harmonizes fairly with that which had already become dominant in the Jewish theocracy. The garden of Eden, as the land of Canaan, is the especial spot out of the whole universe which enjoys the favour and protection of God. The government of the world must be arranged with a single view to the welfare of its chosen denizens. But, on the other hand, man in Paradise is to be held in the primitive leading-strings for which his motions were designed. No original impulse, no wayward craving for knowledge, must disturb his infantile condition. Least of all must he seek to learn the distinction between good and evil, and so to elevate himself—because this incongruous fact is fully admitted—to the rank of his Creator. The fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden must neither be eaten nor touched. Humanity, like its traditional progenitor, has transgressed the command, and to that transgression must be ascribed whatever of progress, utility, or glory it has achieved. But as an ultimate fact, it still remains true, and the truth is loudly avouched by Skepticism, that the forbidden fruit, though not unpleasant to the taste, and a fruit to be desired to make one wise, leaves behind it an after-flavour of flatness and vapidity, and, what is still worse, produces a feeling of emptiness, disappointment, and unappeasable hunger.

IV.

What the legend of the Fall affirms of human knowledge as a theory and presents in an ideal form is in the Koheleth (Ecclesiastes) reduced to practice and founded upon the actual experience of a genuine life. The fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is here reduced to the comprehensive aphorism, 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.' This book therefore represents the extreme point which Hebrew Skepticism, aided probably by foreign influences, succeeded in reaching, and we shall find by a brief examination how complete and unqualified that Skepticism really is.

As to the form of the book, it consists of a series of autobiographical sketches of the author's experience. He represents himself as an ardent searcher after happiness—the definitive certitude of the appetitive life as truth is that of the intellectual life. To find it he starts on a voyage of exploration through the physical and moral

universe, and in order to make his resources in the ideal quest unlimited, he conceives and speaks of himself under the personality of Solomon, the favourite type in later Jewish history of the combination of material power with intellectual greatness. The book begins with a bold avowal of its conclusion. Indeed, its first and last sentences,[1] as well as the mournful refrain of its intermediate portions, are 'vanity of vanities, all is vanity.' Starting with the course of nature, he finds all physical phenomena subject to a Herakleitean flux or perpetually revolving cycles, and 'there is nothing new under the sun.' Passing into the personal narrative, he relates in a tone of mingled distrust and despondency his various experiences. He has endeavoured to find wisdom and knowledge, *i.e.* happiness, in intellectual pursuits, but he finds the quest bitter and its result unsatisfactory. He accordingly arrives at the Skeptical conclusion, 'In much wisdom is much pain, and he who adds to his knowledge adds to his sorrow.' He next engages in mirth and frivolity, but with no better result. He applies himself to active pursuits, and by the success he achieves manifests the superiority of wisdom over folly; but in a retrospect he finds these employments also vanity. He inclines therefore to a pessimistic estimate of life. 'And I hated life, for grievous unto me was the work done under the sun; all was vanity and a chase after wind.' In short Koheleth investigates the whole domain of the natural world, the relation of man to the laws of the universe under which he exists, and in every direction he sees reason for dissatisfaction and uncertainty. He cannot discern any congruous definite plan in the government of the world. What seems good, and is by men prized as such, is only apparently so. What appears evil may have natural impulses or predisposing causes to justify its selection. The satisfaction which pertains to riches, wisdom, knowledge, sensual delights, is not unalloyed, still less durable. What especially contributed to the disappointment and bitter mockery which characterized all terrestrial pursuits was the intervention of death. The gain of a prudent and prosperous life may perchance become the property of the fool. In any case every man must leave the world as he entered it, naked. Besides which, man in respect of his end is not a whit superior to the brutes. The same fate befalls all alike. Wisdom

[1] The first verse of chap. i. is the superscription, while vv. 9–14 of chap. xii. form an epilogue probably written after the rest of the book. In a collection of glosses on Psalms, Job, the Megilloth, published (1878) by Mr. H. J. Matthews, at the end of the notes on Ecclesiastes occurs the statement that 'from xii. 9 to the end of the book was written by Hezekiah and his company, and that Hezekiah was the compiler of the book.'

and intellect have on this point no advantage over ignorance and folly, nor riches over poverty, nor reason over brutishness. Koheleth also discovers that under the laws of the world moderation, not to say indifference, is a cardinal virtue. He deprecates as equally hurtful to human interests over-much righteousness as well as over-much wickedness. So also excess of caution and circumspection is pronounced to be detrimental. Some danger attends all human operations, however innocent or laudable, but man should conform himself to the manifest dictates of nature, remembering that there is a season for everything under heaven.

Nor is Koheleth's investigation of social discrepancies and incongruities more satisfactory. Man in relation to his kind, as well as in relation to nature, supplies him with numberless texts and occasions for the pointing of his Skeptical moral, 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.' He discerns, *e.g.* wickedness in the seat of judgment, and folly arrogating the place and authority of wisdom. He beholds the tear of the oppressed who have no comforter, and he sees the cruelty and unrelenting power of the oppressor. He discerns the numberless disadvantages that wait on wealth and prosperity. Oftentimes riches bring injury to their possessors, in the form, *e.g.* of additional care, sleeplessness, and ill-health. He sees that in the capricious march of events fools are exalted, while great men remain in poverty and obscurity, servants riding on horseback and princes going on foot. Human intercourse he discovers to be replete with occasions of vexation, trouble, and anger, though the wise man will endeavour to repress these passions. He is fully aware of the hollow conventionalities and false friendships that are current among men, and recommends a stoical apathy to popular rumours. He even seems to think that the social restrictions of laws, customary usages, also contribute their quota to the sum of human misery, though in the interests of peace he counsels submission rather than resistance to constituted authority. In a word, the social universe of humanity appears to Koheleth as devoid of any distinct plan or methodical arrangement as the universe of nature. Whether virtue or vice becomes dominant seems all a matter of chance; whether intellect or ignorance emerges from the crowd and asserts a superiority over men is altogether uncertain. The rule of providence is in actual operation a rule of thumb, and the government of the world and humanity resolves itself on critical investigation to a subtle, profound, but indisputable anarchy. On the doings of men, as on the works of nature, is inscribed in legible characters, 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.'

In Koheleth, therefore, we find a marked advance on all prior

stages, both of Hebrew speculation and Hebrew Skepticism. Here the doubter is no longer perplexed by the difficulties especially pertaining to theology—the problem of the existence of evil, the theory of Divine retribution, the denial of a future state. There is no arraignment as in Job of one particular phase of the Divine government of the world. It is the general order of the universe, the wisdom revealed by the collective sum of all its phenomena, that is here called in question. A universe where all things are in perpetual mutation—in which times and seasons, physical and human, are continually changing—in which wise men and fools, the illustrious and despised, reasoning beings and brutes, meet with the same fate—in which all enjoyment begets satiety or disappointment—in which men prey on and tyrannize over each other—in which death intervenes and thwarts the wisest of human projects, is not, according to Koheleth, a desirable universe to live in. It is true he starts with a bias against the reasonable, beneficent, inevitable features of the universe. He traverses nature and humanity with a kind of Diogenes lantern and a cynical profession of looking for non-existing excellences. He collects together whatever seems purposeless, ineffective, evanescent, or in any respect imperfect, and over each instance he pronounces the pessimistic wail, 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.' A diagnosis of the manner in which men of the peculiar type of mind of Koheleth are affected by aspects of nature and humanity most in harmony with their variable moods, might suggest whether the true reason of his dissatisfaction with the world is not to be found in a too great similarity of some of its operations to his own wayward and capricious temper. Perhaps the Skeptics on our list who most resemble him are Cornelius Agrippa and Montaigne, the former for his bitterness, the latter for his versatile humour. It would certainly be difficult to conceive a universe in which Koheleth and Montaigne would be unable to find some imperfection or cause of dissatisfaction. Indeed, the resemblance between the Preacher and the great French essayist goes beyond moods of temper. In thought and style the Hebrew is almost as *ondoyant* as Montaigne himself. Mutability and incertitude are his themes, mutable and uncertain is the mode in which he treats them. The fluxes and cycles he discerns in nature, the vacillations and changes he finds in man, the fickleness he perceives in himself—all are mirrored in the method of his book. To follow his reasoning in any consecutive manner is almost tantamount to his favourite synonym for vain pursuit—a chase after the wind. Here a sententious severe maxim inculcating self-discipline is followed by a libertine precept recom-

mending self-indulgence. Here, earnest and profound reasoning follows upon frivolous and superficial moralizing. In one place we have a devout Jew speaking with reverence of the temple worship, while in close juxtaposition we find an argument which might almost have emanated from an Atheist. In some places he lauds wisdom, prudence, and virtue, in others he vilifies or at least speaks slightingly of them; in short, like Montaigne, though without confessing the proclivity, still less taking a humorous pleasure in exaggerating it, he revels in the fluctuations and inconsistencies he discerns in all things. One might even be pardoned for supposing that the disparaging terms which he applies to the vanities of the world are only half earnest, and that a universe which absolutely forbade his favourite conclusion would be of all vanities the greatest.

From this standpoint of the author's it is not surprising that Koheleth should contain contradictions of the most palpable kind. Herder and Eichhorn thought the book was intended to contrast the opposite ratiocinations of two controversialists,[1] and many commentators since their time have shown that the greater portion of the book may be arranged in antithetical propositions, of which half deny what the other half affirm.[2] Some have even gone to the extent of supposing a dual authorship. For my part, I see no adequate reason for such violent expedients. The phenomenon disclosed by Ecclesiastes is, as we shall find, common among Skeptical thinkers. It is one example of the method of thought which we shall have to discuss under the name of 'Twofold Truth.' The supposed contradictions are, in other words, only the fitful, variable moods of a genuine Skeptic.

There can be little doubt, in my opinion, that the thoughts and reasonings of Koheleth are derived to a considerable extent from Gentile sources, though the exact amount of such obligations cannot easily be ascertained. Oftentimes the foreign elements consist rather of a peculiar colouring or tendency than of direct propositions, though of the latter also there is no lack. There are

[1] On more recent controversy respecting the unity or duality of the Book of Ecclesiastes, compare Kuenen, *De Godsdienst van Israel*, Tweede Deel. p. 376. For an exhaustive review of the various opinions of commentators on the book, see Dr. Ginsburg's introduction to his *Coheleth*.

[2] A collection of these antithetical propositions may be found in Mr. Tyler's *Ecclesiastes* (London, Williams and Norgate, 1874), p. 47. Compare also Kuenen's *Godsdienst*, ut supra, p. 379. As bearing upon the question of single or plural authorship, the recently discovered gloss above alluded to, which attributes the compilation of the book to *Hezekiah and his school*, is at least very noteworthy.

traces, *e.g.* of Stoic and Epikourean philosophy in the book,[1] but these do not appear to me so pronounced and unquestionable as to exclude their derivation from other and more native sources. As a whole, the book must be pronounced utterly unjewish; its conceptions of God, nature, providence, humanity, are alien to the genius of a theocracy. Saving a few clauses, it might have been written by a Pagan and an Atheist. And yet we discover among its manifold inconsistencies an undoubted reminiscence of the old Jewish theory of Providence which is discussed in Job,[2] and against which Koheleth in its general tenor and spirit is a powerful polemic. Jewish too are the allusions to the temple service, the payment of vows, offering of sacrifices, &c. But when all these elements of Jewish faith are collected together, they do not amount to much, not enough to affect in any appreciable degree its Gentile spirit and motive. As might be anticipated from its complex character, commentators are far from agreeing as to its chief conclusion. For my part, I am unable to perceive that a single uniform conclusion can with any certainty be ascribed to the book. Its final determinations appear to me just as multiform and many-sided as its reasonings. Thus we have repeated inculcations of extreme Epikoureanism, not to use a more forcible term. We have no less explicit enunciations of Stoical austerity. We have decided intimations of a very deeply seated 'Weltschmerz,' occasionally verging on pessimistic despair; and these various tendencies are so commingled and interfused that it is impossible to say which of the incompatible conclusions is that preferred by the author. Perhaps in interpreting Koheleth we ought to adopt Montaigne's rule in estimating his own diversiform conclusions, viz. that each is to be taken merely as the expression of the writer's mood at the time of inditing it. Assuming, however, that a single determination must be arrived at, I do not know that we can select a better than that which has been adopted by so many interpreters of the book, I mean that which affirms as the final guide and principle of all human action, the fear of God. In this case Koheleth would rank with the many Skeptical thinkers from Sokrates to Kant who, in despair of finding a solution for the puzzles of the universe, and therefore a satisfactory outcome for their speculative faculties, take as a pure categorical imperative the eternal existence of God and duty, and ask no further. Certainly, the brusque, peremptory manner in

[1] Comp. on this subject Mr. Tyler's work above quoted, and see Munk's *Mélanges de Philosophie Juive*, p. 463.

[2] Chap. viii. 12, 13, with which comp. ix. 2, 3, 4.

which the fear of God is enjoined here and there throughout the book points in this direction. As the last nine verses appear to me an epilogue subsequently added, I do not lay stress on the 'Hear the conclusion of the whole matter,' &c., though this shows that a similar view of the main intent of the book was held at a very early period.

To me the most striking features of Koheleth are what I regard his occasional glimpses of the truth in relation to the anomalies in the universe and humanity which so sorely perplexed him. He evinces, *e.g.* some inclination to evolve them from inevitable necessities in the original structure and mutual relations of the worlds of nature and man. Few remarks on the insufficiency of knowledge to satisfy man's insatiable desires seem to me truer, and few justifications of Skepticism more profound, than that contained in the following words: 'He hath also put Infinity into their heart, so that man understandeth not from beginning to ending the work which God hath made,'[1] where the measureless extent of man's intellectual energies, and the unlimited scope provided for them in the universe, seem to be clearly asserted. The same truth of the impossibility of satisfying the soul he asserts in another place, and in a manner which proves to me that Koheleth had explored the depths of Skeptical thought. Elsewhere he seems to hint[2] that the anomalies of the universe are not inherent in the nature of things, but are due to the arbitrary will of the Deity, and were introduced to teach men reverence and submission; though it is quite possible that he did not intend to make any distinction between the two theories. Another example of his far-reaching thought is found in his remark that prosperity and adversity are by Divine law placed opposite to each other, so that either seems to entail the existence of its antithetical. Among other instances of Koheleth's Skeptical wisdom, I must also class his protest against religious dogma or over-confidence before God. 'Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart hasten to utter a word before God; for God is in heaven and thou upon earth; therefore, let thy words be few.'[3] Few admonitions were better merited by prominent teachers among the Jews, indeed it strikes at the root of every

[1] Chap. iii. 11. The Hebrew word here rendered infinity (Haolam) has been interpreted in various ways. But its signification in later Hebrew of 'the world' seems inadequate. Ginsburg, after Rosenmüller and others, renders it by 'eternity.' See Rosenmüller's *Scholia, ad loc.*, and compare Gesenius, *Thesaurus, ad vocem.*

[2] Comp. chap. vii. 14, and iii. 14.

[3] Chap. v. 2.

form of extreme religionism. No more prolific source of error has existed in the world than the rashness of fallible men in speaking in the presence and in the stead of God. If we may take it for granted that the motive of the book was a polemic against the formal dogmatic sacerdotal tendencies which culminated in the sect of the Pharisees, the rashness here deprecated would receive a still more pointed application. All these utterances of Koheleth's wisdom are put in the form of aphorisms, and are rather simple intuitions than results of logical processes and elaborate ratiocinations, but this is in harmony with the strongly emotional sensitive nature of the Hebrews, to whom methodical reasoning was a thing almost unknown.

V.

All the tendencies of Hebrew Free-thought already considered attain a somewhat advanced stage in subsequent books of the Old Testament and the Apocrypha. The belief, *e.g.* in a theocratic protector of the chosen people was irreparably injured in the minds of advanced Jewish thinkers by the national calamities that set in with the Babylonish captivity. To assert in the face of such overwhelming disasters a peculiar and exclusive regard of Providence for the Jewish nation and worship seemed from the religious standpoint of the people a denial of the most patent and indisputable facts. This is the Skeptical phase which meets us, *e.g.* in the prophecy of Malachi:

> Every one that doeth evil
> Is good in the sight of Jahve, and He delighteth in them.
> Where then is the God of Justice?[1]

> Vain is it to serve God,
> And what profit is it that we keep his ordinance,
> And that we walk mournfully before Jahve of Hosts?
> For now we call the proud happy;
> They also that work wickedness are built up;
> They even tempt God, yet are they delivered.[2]

About this time too we first find distinct intimations of a doctrine of future life among the Jews as a state in which the perversities and anomalies in human affairs might be readjusted and rectified. It was indeed only upon this newer basis that their traditional dogma of a theocratic providence could possibly be re-established. The Epikoureanism of Koheleth moreover received not

[1] Mal. ii. 17. [2] Mal. iii. 17, 18.

only ratification but a portentous and extreme extension in the Book of Wisdom. Here Jewish Free-thought assumes the virulent form of deliberate apostasy, avowed Atheism, and unbridled licentiousness.[1] Here the older traditions of Mosaism and the prophets are not only ignored, as by Job and Koheleth, but are ridiculed and scouted with bitterness and contempt.[2] The national faith is not only dead and buried, but its adherents, or rather their descendants, unite in performing a triumphal dance on its grave. No other result could have been anticipated from the profane alliance of worldly prosperity with spiritual excellence. Indeed, if any proof were wanting of the danger of basing religious and moral verities upon temporary and terrestrial sanctions, or upon a conception of Providence which subordinates the laws of the universe to the capricious needs of man, it is abundantly supplied by this portion of Jewish history. At the same time we must not regard this flood of immoral recklessness as exclusively national. There were too many foreign elements, especially Greek and Macedonian, involved to allow us to pronounce it a purely spontaneous outcome of Jewish thought. Besides which, the political, religious, and social disturbance contemporaneous with it must also be taken into account as a powerful coefficient. A somewhat similar instance of the combined influence of political demoralization and an influx of foreign thought in inducing libertine morals we find in the later days of the Roman Republic, and we shall have to investigate a still more remarkable example when we come to the Italian Renaissance. In the case of the Jews the old dogma was not long in re-asserting its vitality, and the intensely vigorous nature of that vitality in extremely adverse circumstances forms one of the most remarkable phenomena in the history of religious thought.

VI.

That all these various Skeptical impulses should have issued in the formation of a sect or school of Jewish Skeptics is only what we might have anticipated, though the tenets of such a sect do not indicate an advance in Hebrew Free-thought beyond the stages we have already examined. The origin of the Sadducees, nay,

[1] Comp. Grimm, *Das Buch der Weisheit*: Kurzgefasstes Exegetisches Handbuch zu den Apocryphen, Einleitung, pp. 27–30. De Wette, *Einleitung in das Alte Test.*, § 314. Ewald, *Geschichte des Volks Israel*, iv. p. 554. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, iii. pp. 315–493.

[2] The distinction between the Skepticism of Koheleth and the Book of Wisdom is well pointed out by Grimm in his introduction to the latter book. See preceding note.

the very meaning of the name, is uncertain. Its possible connection with the Hebrew word signifying righteousness may refer to the stress which some leading thinkers of the school placed upon the Stoical dogma of absolute morality.[1] This theory harmonizes both with the Hellenic affinities which characterized the Sadducees, and with their polemical attitude to the Pharisees, who undoubtedly made 'righteousness' to consist of, and depend on, an elaborate ecclesiasticism. It is mainly as opponents to the extreme dogma and ritualism of the latter sect that the Sadducees emerge in Hebrew history. They represent the free-culture which, in opposition to the theocratic instincts of the nation, was foremost in embracing and assimilating those foreign elements of thought and life that resulted from the contact of the Jews with Assyrians, Persians, and Greeks. Their intellectual impulses were chiefly derived from the last-named. To the Greeks they were indebted for the love of discussion, a novel feature in Jewish minds—the mooting questions as themes for controversy and conducting the discussions in the *pro* and *con.* manner which betokens a regard for logical ratiocination. In the latter respect they have been compared to Greek Sophists, but their starting point and religious environment supplied a limit to these dialectical exercises which must have greatly impeded their free scope. But in contrast to the Pharisees and their dogmatic leanings, the Sadducees were undeniably rationalistic and free-thinking. Their tendencies were secularly political as opposed to theocratic. They represent culture as against Ecclesiasticism, and Gentilism in contradistinction to a narrow and exclusive Judaism. But while their leanings and sympathies were generally in the direction of freedom intellectual and spiritual, there is some difficulty in determining exactly how far their actual tenets followed in the wake of these generous impulses. In their conception of deity their views were undeniably broader and more tolerant than those which distinguished the older theocracy. Their traditional stress on Mosaism was probably adopted not as a belief in the exclusive superiority of that legislation as the only existing revelation of divine truth, but as an obvious mode of confining the dogmatic tendencies of the Pharisees within some reasonable limits, and preventing that stress on oral tradition by means of which the Pharisees, like other religious hierophants, sought to obscure the simplicity of the old law. The direction of Christ's own teaching was, in this particular,

[1] Comp. articles on Sadducees in Herzog, *Real-Encyclopädie* and Smith's *Bible Dictionary*; Wellhausen, *Pharisäer und Sadducäer*; Keim's *Jesu von Nazara*, i. 273, &c.

altogether in harmony with Sadducean tendencies, nor is this the only instance of a resemblance between the doctrine of the Sadducees and the first form of Christianity. Their relation to the Pharisees is not unlike that of Protestants who, in the interests of spiritual freedom as well as dogmatic simplicity, oppose the religious bondage of Romanism, while their political position is well illustrated by Wellhausen's remark,[1] that they adopted the secular principles of Jewish kings as against the theocratic hopes and aims of the prophets. The motive which suggested the curtailment of the dogmatic sources of Pharisaism may also have prompted their denial of the existence of angels, spirits, and generally of a future state. Thereby they cut at the root of the various theophanies, supernatural appearances, &c. which occupy such a conspicuous place in the early history of the Jews, and were so often employed to the detriment of the national welfare by unscrupulous pretenders. They also affirmed the entire freedom of the human will as opposed to the fatalism which necessarily forms a part of every theocratic system of thought. They set themselves too against the elaborate ritual, the fastings and endless purifications, on which the Pharisees so loudly insisted. In their social habits they appear also to have been less formal and ascetic than their opponents, who were scandalized, *e.g.* at their use of gold and silver vessels in their feasts. In a similar spirit they advocated the free enjoyment of such pleasures as earth has to offer, and deprecated all religious restraints in the direction of needless austerity. In a word, the Sadducees represent the wealth, culture, intelligence, social dignity, and refinement of the highest class of Jewish society, and may be compared both in these respects and in the common possession of Free-thinking aptitudes to the highest ranks of Athenian society in the time of Perikles. Some have thought that the standpoint of Koheleth represents that of the Sadducees. For my part, I think there is much to be said for such a theory. Independently of the fact that the author of Koheleth belonged to the Jewish aristocracy, not a few of the arguments employed and opinions enunciated in that book are known to have distinguished the Sadducees; and as they are put forward by a confessed sympathizer, it is no violent hypothesis to assume that the author was in all probability a Sadducee. If this supposition were provable, we should then have what we now lack, some authentic record of the tenets of the Sadducees represented from a friendly point of view instead of being, as we are now, compelled to learn their opinions from hostile sources.

[1] *Die Pharisäer und die Sadducäer*, p. 87.

The Sadducees were not, like the Pharisees, a popular sect. They stood too far aloof from the theocratic sympathies, the austere asceticism, the religious pretentiousness, which were the readiest avenues to Jewish popularity. Besides which, there was a difference in social status and intelligence which contributed to sever them still further from the populace. As a result of this separation, few sects of Free-thinkers have been more vilified and traduced by their dogmatic opponents than the Sadducees. The Talmud brands them as heretics, no doubt on account of their indifference to the theocratic beliefs of their race. They were stigmatized as Epikoureans, probably for no better reason than their objection to the religious austerity of the Pharisees. They were saluted as 'profane,' 'worldly,' 'men-pleasers,' &c. because of their secular tendencies in politics.[1] There was no phase of their Free-thought and religious moderation on which their adversaries did not affix some depreciatory or contemptuous epithet. Ultimately they may be said to have paid the penalty of cherishing ideas and opinions out of sympathy with their race and religion, the penalty that has so often overtaken liberal views and aspirations in a community of religious zealots. As a school with a distinctive name and more or less definite tenets they ceased to exist. But in the subsequent history of Judaism, the freer tendencies which gave birth to the Sadducees have been productive of no inconsiderable effects. Every Jewish Free-thinker of the Middle Ages may claim to be an intellectual descendant of those who first introduced breadth, tolerance, and Gentile culture into the narrow confines of their own faith. Maimonides, Levi ben Gerson, and other Skeptical philosophers, only carry on the tradition of the Sadducees. These later Jewish Free-thinkers rival in extent of knowledge, in boldness of speculation, in intellectual versatility, and, in a word, in philosophical competence, the leading names in the history of modern thought; and prove that the inferiority so often charged against Hebrew speculation is mainly due to creed, education, and religious and political surroundings, rather than to the single cause of inherent or racial peculiarity.

Our survey, necessarily brief, of Hebrew Skepticism has brought before us enough of its salient qualities to enable us to place it among the Skepticisms of history. Until we come to those later developments which Jewish thought received at the hands of such teachers as Maimonides, until, in other words, it had ceased

[1] The Sadducees are undoubtedly the Free-thinkers on whom so much invective and abuse are expended in the Psalter of the Pseudo-Solomon. See chap. iv. and comp. Wellhausen's notes on it, *Phar. und Sadd.* p. 146.

to be distinctively Jewish, there is no pretence for accusing it of any great excess of philosophic freedom, nothing, in short, which approximates to the Pyrrhonism of the Greeks or the Nihilism of the Hindus. As represented by the Old and New Testaments and other writings within the same literary cycle, it revolves round its central facts of the existence of Deity, and a supernatural revelation, as a planet does round its central sun. It has little of the breadth, the versatility, the insatiable inquisitiveness, the dialectical audacity, the intellectual vigour, the serene and passionless temperament of Greek Skepticism; nor, again, has it the daring freedom, the measureless profundity, the metaphysical acumen, the transcendental apperception, the dreamy mysticism of Hindu Free-thought. It ends as it begins, with theology, and with theology, moreover, of a peculiarly harsh, narrow, and dogmatic type. While acknowledging the blessings which Judaism has conferred on the religious life of humanity, we must still ascribe to its exclusiveness no small portion of that anti-human feeling which has made the Jewish nation amenable to the charge of '*odium humani generis*.' But notwithstanding the circumscribed character of its operations, inevitable from the limited range of the convictions on which it acted, Jewish Skepticism denotes a clear advance in the mental history of the people. It was the rejection for at least some time of the theocratic swaddling-bands which kept the nation in political infancy. The contact of the Jews with the outer world, like Adam eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, if it lost them their terrestrial paradise of the land of Canaan, certainly gave them a higher intellectual status as well as a fuller insight—had they chosen to avail themselves of it—into the actual conditions of political and social existence. The downfall of the national aspirations, the failure of the long-cherished expectation of the advent of a terrestrial Messias, were compensated in their case, as indeed the destruction of illusions and unveracities must in any case be beneficial, by imparting wider conceptions of the nature of Deity, the scheme of Providence, and the government of the world, and by suggesting a truer because more spiritual standard of human felicity considered as a mark of divine favour.

Nor for Christians who are so largely dieted on Hebrew history and theology are the manifestations of Free-thought contained in Job and Koheleth useless. They represent a vigorous and wholesome reaction against beliefs which, whatever their religious merits, inhibited the teachings of experience and falsified the true method and order of the universe. They evince an

inclination to make the reason the supreme arbiter of all truth, and thereby to assert the mental independence of humanity. They proclaim, therefore, a warfare against sacerdotalism and all other repressive and dogmatic systems. In any age and under any circumstances the spirit that inspired Job and Koheleth must have tended to secure freedom both of thought and its expression, even if that freedom did not attain to the unlimited range and scope which is implied in the full meaning of Skepticism.

II. *Skepticism in Hindu Philosophy.*

In treating of the Skeptical negation contained in Hindu philosophy, I need hardly say that the phase of thought which it represents is different on most points from those we have already discussed. While possessing distinctive peculiarities to which neither Greek nor Hebrew thought can lay claim, it includes in its wide-reaching scope, its multitudinous forms, its versatile many-sided energies, all that is most striking and valuable in both. With the Hebrew it shares the meditative, pietistic, acquiescent religious feeling which forms the distinguishing attribute of the Semitic races, while it possesses affinities with all the principal Hellenic types of thought, especially the ideal, negative, and free-thinking, from the Eleatics to the Neo-Platonists. Indeed, there are few forms of modern European speculation which cannot find adumbrations and resemblances in some of the numberless outgrowths of ancient Hindu thought. Still the Skepticism of India has in its fundamental principles quite a unique and *sui generis* character. Not only is it negative as compared with the suspensory character of Greek Skepticism, but it has a curiously metaphysical and introspective tendency. Nowhere has the genius of abstraction ruled with such absolute sway as in Hindu speculation. Nowhere has the human mind made such persistent and determined efforts to surmount the material limits of its environment. As a result of these metaphysical flights it is also marked by an unscrupulous audacity which disdains all appeal to human experience or the actual conditions of terrestrial existence considered as limits of knowledge and as indispensable factors in every process of demonstration. Thus the Hindu thinker moves in a world of his own, a supersensual universe he has himself created. By the plastic power of his intellect and the force of his imagination he is able to transmute what is material to spiritual, and, on the other hand, to conceive in the form of refined matter what is essentially spiritual. Hindu philosophy teems with intellectual creations in which it is not easy to say whether idealistic

abstraction or super-subtle materialization preponderates most. The advantages which Skepticism or negation are enabled to derive from idealism will frequently be shown in the course of our researches. That a race of thinkers like the Hindus, who are almost equally adepts at idealizing the real and realizing the ideal, to whom neither matter nor spirit, when required for purposes of intellection or philosophical systematization, presents any difficulties, possesses peculiar qualifications for negative speculation, must therefore be obvious. Accordingly negation carried to its utmost limits may be called the main characteristic of Hindu thought. Whatever presents itself as a subject or object of thought is *ipso facto* regarded as an object of non-thought or at least non-affirmation. But with all its negative propensities Hindu speculation is based upon a few rudimentary dogmas common to all its schools of thought, and these are of so rare and peculiar a character as to be almost restricted to Hindu thinkers. Thus all alike maintain that existence is an evil from which humanity has to seek deliverance. That the world and its deities perish and renew themselves in recurrent cycles. That the human soul undergoes metempsychosis from which the wise will endeavour to obtain emancipation by means of gradual self-extinction. That the present existence of every man is affected by the good or ill he may have done in prior states, and his future will be similarly determined by his actions in the present life. That the highest knowledge makes all religious rites and sacrificial observances quite needless. These propositions comprehend what may be called the national creed of the Hindus. They comprise a standpoint of human thought and effort partly theological, partly philosophical, partly positive, partly negative, to which no other system of thought, ancient or modern, bears resemblance. But upon this general soil of ultimate national conviction we find a luxuriant outgrowth of many various systems, differing widely from each other in origin, method, and object, and resembling each other only in the negative tendencies common more or less to all. Of these I have selected for our purpose the principal systems known as the Sankhya, the Nyaya, the Vedanta, and the Buddha. In all of them we shall discover, in varying proportions, sometimes Skeptical, sometimes negative thought; but all bearing some impress of peculiarity on account both of their dogmatic source and their manner of evolution.

I.

'The ancient Hindus,' says Max Müller, 'were a nation of philosophers such as could nowhere have existed except in India.'[1]

[1] *Chips from a German Workshop*, vol. i. p. 66.

But philosophy in India, as in Greece and in every other country where it has existed, received its first impulse from Skepticism. Its advent seems marked by the insurrection of Kapila—the traditional founder of the Sankhya philosophy—against the Brahmanic dogmatism and sacerdotalism previously existing. This event, itself the precursor of a yet broader and fuller system of mental freedom, *i.e.* Buddhism, probably happened about 600 B.C., and was therefore nearly contemporaneous with the first awakening of Hellenic philosophy in the school of Elea. The main tendency of Kapila's thought was the assertion of a devout and mystic rationalism (the word Sankhya means ratiocination or deliberation), as against the doctrine and ritual of the Brahmans. It announced perfection by knowledge as opposed to perfection by sacrificial acts. As the latter were based upon the Veda, Kapila must to a certain extent have declared war against the ancient scriptures of the Hindus; indeed, he pronounces the sacred writings to be incapable of assuring to men liberation and final beatitude. From the same standpoint of reason, he protested against the personified powers of nature by means of which vulgar minds assigned a direct volitional purpose to all its phenomena. Instead of these divinities of the Indian Olympus, Kapila imagined an unconscious, non-willing principle of nature, not unlike in character and attributes to the forces or laws which modern science has substituted for the divine volition of theologians. In other words, Kapila was a materialist, though not in the gross sense we attach to that designation. The Primordial matter which he regarded as the cause of the universe was a certain rarified essence of matter, possibly not unlike the *materia prima* of the schoolmen, or the nebulous matrix out of which was evolved, according to some astronomers, the existing planetary systems. It should, however, be added that Kapila did not formally deny volition to this ultimate and semi-material first cause; he rather refused to predicate it. He seems to have adopted, in short, the suspensive attitude of a Greek Skeptic in relation to it. This, however, did not save him from the imputation of atheism any more than a similar Skeptical caution, with regard to the gods of Greece, saved Sokrates from being indicted as an atheist. But Kapila's greatest service to Hindu thought was his vindication of the human conscience and reason. The chief object of his teachings was to concentrate all truth, and the blessedness which comes of possessing truth, in the personal consciousness of the inquirer. This was the Skeptical leaven which transformed the whole subsequent course of Hindu speculation. As a

rationalist, Kapila was a despiser of all mere dogma, except so far as it might be authenticated by the investigation and deliberate conviction of the individual thinker. He has accordingly been compared to Sokrates and Descartes, and there can be little doubt that he resembles in many respects those great defenders of intellectual freedom. Like Sokrates, he substituted inquiry for authoritative teaching, and studiously ignored the deities of his country. Like Descartes, he directed men's attention to consciousness as the only reliable basis of truth. He has also affinities with other and more modern Free-thinkers in his opposition to Brahmanic dogma and the exclusive authority of the Veda, for in his classification of methods of certitude, he gave the highest place to reason and the lowest to revelation, *i.e.* it is to be presumed, in the sense of unverified dogma. He thus broke the chains of Brahmanic tyranny and sacerdotalism in the only way in which chains of a similar kind can be broken.

But Kapila is thoroughly Hindu in his conception of the aims of philosophy and truth-quest. What Sokrates set before him as a disinterested search after truth unalloyed by any calculations of pleasure or pain, profit or loss, being utterly indifferent to what fate might have in store for him, Kapila and his school conceived as a method of deliverance from pain. The first aphorism of the Sankhya Karika begins thus:

'The inquiry is into the means of precluding the three sorts of pain, for pain is embarrassment.'[1] This human evil he subdivides into three classes—1. Internal or personal. 2. What springs from external sources (Human). 3. What has a superhuman origin. The general cause of these evils is the alliance of soul with matter, and its remedy consists in the liberation of the soul from material shackles which can only be accomplished by the perfection of knowledge. In the complete scheme or conspectus of his system he divides existence, together with the human faculties related to it, into twenty-five categories, starting from the principle of nature and descending by successive stages of transcendentalism, like the divisions in some of the Gnostic systems, until he arrives at the grosser forms of terrene elements. His twenty-fifth category consists of the individual soul as the single subject in which all these objective elements inhere. His summary of these categories, which we need not follow, bear a very remarkable resemblance to the teaching of Scotus Erigena.[2] More noteworthy for our purpose is Kapila's

[1] Colebrooke's *Essays*, vol. i. p. 272.

[2] Colebrooke *ut supra*, i. p. 256. Comp. J. Scoti Erigenæ *de Div. Nat.*

elaborate account of the hindrances to human knowledge. These he seems to have investigated far more profoundly, or at least with much greater amplitude of classification, than did Pyrrhôn or Sextos Empeirikos. In contrast to the 10 tropoi of Greek Skeptics, Kapila assigns five primary obstructions to the true working of the human faculties—(1) obscurity or error; (2) illusion or conceit; (3) extreme illusion or passion; (4) gloom or hatred; (5) utter darkness or fear; but these he afterwards subdivides into no less than sixty-two different kinds. Making allowance for the fanciful character and numerical extravagance which attaches to all Hindu classification, we must admit that his conception of the difficulties besetting the path of the truth-seeker is based upon a larger view of the complicated structure of the human mind, and the diverse agencies by which it is acted upon, than we find in the case of any other free-thinker. And the fact of such a minute exploration of all conceivable sources of error must be accepted as a proof of the Skeptical animus of the Hindu Sokrates. I have already noted Kapila's Skeptical attitude with respect to the being of a God, and his similarity in this particular to Sokrates, but the resemblance between the Hellenic and the Hindu stage of speculation is further marked by the high moral purity of the Sankhya philosophy, and by the fact that there is a second or theological phase of the Sankhya of which the founder was Patanjali, just as the Sokratic dialectic was succeeded by the idealism and theosophy of Plato and his successors.[1] The extreme negation of the Sankhya is expressed in the sixty-fourth aphorism of the Sankhya Karika as follows: 'So through study of principles the conclusive incontrovertible one only knowledge is attained, that neither I am, nor is aught mine, nor do I exist.'[2] This at first sight would seem to be an affirmation of the complete extinction of the individual soul such as we have in the Nyaya philosophy and in the Nirvana of the Buddhists, but in reality it is an affirmation of the unbodied soul's supreme existence. The Sankhya indeed expressly repudiates the charge of craving annihilation. In the forty-seventh aphorism we are told that 'in neither way, whether as a means or as an end, is this, viz.

lib. v., and see chapter on the 'Semi-Skepticism of the Schoolmen,' vol. ii. Evening ix.

[1] Colebrooke, i. p. 265. Comp. Thompson, *Bhagavad-Gita*, p. xlii. Other writers, as, *e.g.* Dr. R. Williams, *Christianity and Hinduism*, p. 279, make the religious successor of Kapila to be Sakya Muni, the founder of Buddhism.

[2] Colebrooke, i. p. 287.

annihilation, the soul's aim.[1] The final beatitude of the soul, according to this philosophy, consists in the discrimination of itself from nature (or matter). No doubt practically the separation of the individual soul from all terrestrial and corporeal association, from all functions and means of knowledge, is an idea almost as metaphysically abstruse and negative as its total annihilation; yet, theoretically, there is a wide difference between self-discrimination and self-extinction. In the former case the condition is conceived as intellectual rather than mystical, an active instead of a passive state. The soul in the Sankhya only gains knowledge by being invested with the 'subtle person'—a kind of half spiritual individuality, consisting apparently of disposition, temperament, &c. before being 'clothed upon' with a gross material body. It is in this state that the soul is properly the Ego, and while thus situated she stands in the same relation to her various agencies and modes of acquiring knowledge as the mechanic does to his tools. Nevertheless the state itself is an imprisonment, and her final deliverance is effected by discarding the senses, perceptions, reason, and other material agencies by which she has been informed and rendered capable of liberation.[2] Without stopping to point out the pregnant nature of this principle, or the manifold forms it has received both within and without Christianity, we can perceive its negative tendency. The pathway to Sankhya perfection is that of Skepticism. Ordinary sources of knowledge are distrusted. The conclusions of the senses, the convictions of the reason, are, as far as possible, discarded. The sole mark of truth left is an accidental, unregulated, unverifiable intuition, for the Sankhya perfection, like the Buddhist Nirvana, may be attained in this life. Nature or matter having contributed its quota to the liberation of the soul, disappears. The Ego, the man with his terrene investitures, his faculties and personality, is no more. Nothing is left but the soul in the full enjoyment of her eternal self-discrimination and self-contemplation.[3]

Nor is it unimportant to note that the Sankhya, in common with other Hindu schemes of thought, has discovered means of attaining a goal of negation, besides a Skeptical analysis or vivisection of the opposing position. Instead of confining human energy to a piecemeal abstraction from methods of knowledge of one mode after the other—first, *e.g.* taking away the senses, then the reasoning powers, &c.—it has found a shorter course by insisting on a direct contemplation of the ultimate object sought. The

[1] Ballantyne, *Christianity contrasted with Hindu Philosophy*, Intro. p xxx.

[2] *Sankhya Karika, Aph.* lvii. Colebrooke, *Essays*, i. p. 278.

[3] *Sankhya Karika, Aph.* lxvii. Colebrooke, i. p. 279. Comp. also *Aph.* lxviii.

greater part of Hindu philosophical teaching is taken up with plans to accomplish this result. The learner is directed to shut out the visible world and persistently to contemplate—nothing, or some abstraction equally impalpable. The power of this intense concentration of all the faculties on mere vacuity in a race so physically inert as Hindus is undeniable; indeed, its effect in shutting out forcibly all avenues to knowledge and inducing a state of idealistic Skepticism was more powerful in their case than any mere rationalizing Skepticism could have been. While the other chief Indian systems laid peculiar stress on this idealistic method, the Sankhya, as we have seen, combined it with ratiocination, its standpoint of pure consciousness being as available for one as the other.

A similar point of absolute excellence is also finally gained by the soul in respect of morality. 'By attainment of perfect knowledge,' says the Sankhya,[1] 'virtue and the rest become causeless,' *i.e.* as I suppose, unconditioned, absolute in spontaneity, in vigour, and in effect—the ethical counterpart, in short, of the intellectual perfection, a state in which soul remains in the eternal contemplation and enjoyment not only of supreme wisdom, but also of supreme and unsurpassed goodness.

Thus, notwithstanding primary dogmas of a metaphysical and fanciful kind, the thought of Kapila, or the system which claims him for a founder, is, on the whole, negative and anti-dogmatic. It opposes Reason to Scripture, the individual conscience to sacerdotal observance, and philosophical investigation to authoritative dogma. The mode in which he divests himself of ordinary knowledge is like that employed by Skeptics and Idealists everywhere. Nor is his final bourne more within the reach of the philosophic traveller than the ideal truth of which Greek Skepticism was in search, for it is as easy to apprehend soul in its ultimate stage of self-discrimination and supreme isolation, as to conceive a truth so definitive and infallible that no doubt or question should touch it. The extreme heights of idealism and mysticism may be warmer than the mazy altitudes of irreconcilable Skepticism, but the air breathed is just as rarefied, and ordinary life is sustained with just as much difficulty in the former as in the latter.

II.

If the Sankhya of Kapila gives us an example of Hindu rationalism, the Nyaya of Gotama may be described as a system of Hindu logic. Of the founder of this system nothing is known.

[1] *Aph.* lxvii. Colebrooke, i. p. 278.

Like Kapila, he may be said to hover uncertainly between myth and history, but the scheme of thought ascribed to him has obtained greater currency in India than any system of dialectic has among European nations. But in point of fact the Nyaya is not altogether what we should call a system of logic; it is rather a compound of philosophy, psychology, dialectics, and religion. Gotama commences, *e.g.* the description of his system by the promise of eternal beatitude for all its learners. This promise, as M. St. Hilaire remarks, is the customary preliminary to all Hindu schemes of thought, 'the human mind being much more occupied with this subject in India than among ourselves.'[1]

The system itself Gotama divides into sixteen parts, which Colebrooke termed categories, but which M. St. Hilaire has better denominated topics. The first of these, and the object of all dialectic, is proof or certitude. This he subdivides into four kinds, perception, inference or induction, comparison or analogy, and testimony, whether human or divine. If these classes are to be taken in order of their validity, as seems likely, they evince an apprehension of the real nature of logical certainty which it would not be easy to surpass. Authoritative assertion, *i.e.* dogma, whether human or divine, occupies, it may be observed, the last place in the Nyaya as it does in the Sankhya philosophy. The *divine* testimony of Gotama's fourth class alludes to the text of the Veda, and it is observable that the free critics of the Hindu philosophies, while professing to treat the Vedic text with reverence, do not scruple to modify, contradict, or ignore it whenever it suits their purpose to do so. Gotama's second topic is called the objects of proof. Its twelve subdivisions include the human faculties, their constitution and object, as well as certain abstractions supposed to be related to them. The eighth is noteworthy, as describing the practical suspense, the physical inaction, which, with the Hindu, is the counterpart of the intellectual suspense of the Greek. 'From acts,' says Gotama, 'proceed faults, including, under this designation, passion, or extreme desire, aversion or loathing, and error or delusion. Thus the wise man is he who avoids the three mistakes of having a liking for a thing and acting accordingly; or of having a dislike for a thing and acting accordingly; or of being stupidly indifferent and thereupon acting; instead of being *intelligently indifferent* and not acting at all.'[2] The state of perfect passivity here described is also the subject of the twelfth of matters to be

[1] *Dict. Sci. Phil.* art. 'Nyaya.'

[2] Colebrooke, i. p. 311, note. Comp. Ballantyne *ut supra*, Introduction, p. xxvi.

proven. It is thus explained: 'Deliverance from pain is beatitude; it is absolute prevention of every sort of ill—reckoned in this system to comprehend twenty-one varieties of evil, primary or secondary, viz.: (1) Body; (2–7) the six organs of sense; (8–13) six objects of sensation; (14–19) six sorts of apprehension and intelligence; (20) pain or anguish; (21) pleasure. For even this being tainted with evil is pain, as honey may be drugged with poison. This liberation from ill is attained by soul acquainted with the truth by means of holy science, divested of passion through knowledge of the evil incident to objects; meditating on itself; and by the maturity of self-knowledge making its own essence present; relieved from impediments; not earning fresh merit or demerit by deeds done with desire; discerning the previous burden of merit or demerit by devout contemplation; and acquitting it through compressed endurance of its fruit, and thus (previous acts being annulled, and present body departed, and no future body accruing) there is no further connection with the various sorts of ill, since there is no cause for them. This then is prevention of pain of every sort, it is deliverance and beatitude.'[1] I have given this passage at length because it represents the combination of Negation and Pessimism grafted on a system of dialectic which is the distinguishing mark of the Nyaya. Next in order to matters to be proven, Gotama comes to methods of proof, and in the foremost rank of these he places doubt. In reading his description of this 'topic' we almost seem to have alighted by accident on a chapter of Sextos Empeirikos. 'Doubt,' we are told, 'is the consideration of divers contrary matters in regard to one and the same thing, and is of three sorts, arising from common or from peculiar qualities, or merely from contradiction. . . .' Thus an object is observed concerning which it becomes a question whether it be a man or a post; the limbs which would betoken the man, or the crooked trunk which would distinguish the post, being equally unperceived. Again, odour is a peculiar quality of earth: it belongs not to eternal substances, as the ætherial element, nor to transient elements as water; is then earth eternal or uneternal? So one affirms that sound is eternal, another denies that position; and a third person doubts (remains in suspense). The sixth topic, 'demonstrated truth,' gives Gotama an opportunity of noting the contending theories of the different schools of thought in India, and the rarity of any belief which can claim the full consensus of humanity, and he ends his scheme by five or six topics, all of which relate to the value of dissentient opinions and controversial

[1] Colebrooke, i. pp. 311, 312.

arguments in establishing a truth or convincing a gainsayer. Each of these is subdivided into an almost endless number of classes, the distinctions between which are excessively minute and, I may add, unimportant. What this portion of Gotama's scheme proves more than anything else is the negative tendency of his mind.

Summarizing the general features of Nyaya dialectic so far as they have been determined and described by Western writers, and comparing it with Aristotle's 'Organon,' and the numberless systems to which that work has given birth, we cannot help being struck by its emphasis upon the analytical and disjunctive operations of logic. Instead of maintaining an equilibrium between proof and disproof, the affirmation of truth as well as the denial of falsehood, it seems to imply that the latter is the chief function of dialectic, that its object when carried out fully and unreservedly is more destructive than constructive. But this is only what we might have anticipated. A stress upon negative rather than upon positive processes of ratiocination assimilates the dialectic of Gotama to the other principal systems of Hindu thought, and is quite in harmony with the mystic passivity which constitutes the *summum bonum* of his system. A definitive determination theoretically, or a practical conclusion as to which there could be no hesitation, would be an embarrassment to a man whose highest attainment in life were either a passionless mysticism or else intellectual vacuity, and who regarded annihilation as the final consummation of all things. It might be added that Gotama's conception of the negative function of logic is quite in agreement with the views of some prominent logicians of modern times.

But in assessing the negative attributes of the Nyaya dialectic, we must remember that the part of it on which Western inquirers alone can form their judgments purports to be constructive; there remains a much more lengthy and elaborate portion which is professedly dedicated to polemical and destructive processes, and could this be thoroughly investigated, I have little doubt that the negation of the Nyaya would appear in a still more striking light. For our purpose, however, it is enough to bear in mind that the Nyaya logic, like the Sankhya rationalism, ends in negation. Gotama's 'Ataraxia' is supreme and utter immobility, the mystic quietism which determines nothing, denies nothing, and chooses nothing—a condition distinguishable only in words from the final absorption which, as the liberation from all pain, action, and successive transmigrations, he proclaims to be the destiny of the blessed.

III.

The Vedanta may be called, as it has been by one of its best recent expositors,[1] 'the orthodox dogma of the Hindus.' It is more theological than either the Sankhya or the Nyaya; indeed, the term which most clearly designates its chief feature is Pantheism. It also professes more fully than other Hindu modes of thought (with the exception of Buddhism) the attribute of making philosophy the ground of a religious cult, while another distinguishing feature of the same kind is found in the stress which it places on the text of the Veda, whence it obtains its name of Vedanta.

The principal and essential tenets of the Vedanta, to quote Colebrooke,[2] are: 'That God is the omniscient and omnipotent cause of the existence, continuance, and dissolution of the universe. Creation is an act of His will. He is both efficient and material cause of the world: Creator and nature, Framer and frame, Doer and deed. At the consummation of all things, all are resolved into Him: as the spider spins his thread from his own substance and gathers it in again; as vegetables sprout from the soil and return to it, earth to earth; as hair and nails grow from a living body and continue with it. The Supreme Being (Brahma) is one, sole-existent, secondless, entire, without parts, sempiternal, infinite, ineffable, invariable ruler of all, universal soul, truth, wisdom, intelligence, happiness.'

Brahma is thus the sum of all existence, material no less than spiritual. Both Being and Intelligence are included in his essence—indeed it is under the aspect of all-pervading, all-including intelligence that his Being is most generally conceived by the Vedantist. He is the Eternal impersonation of all conceivable knowledge. As such he is both object and subject of all human science and attainment. In all cases it is Brahma that knows, and Brahma that is known. Among metaphysical and theological conceptions, few seem to me sublimer than this. Indeed, I know none that represents with such absolute completeness the divine sacredness of knowledge, and which therefore places it before humanity from such a high ideal standpoint. No doubt our grosser Western intellects find some difficulty in comprehending knowledge which has no other object than itself,[3] but this presented no difficulty to a race of thinkers whose religion and

[1] A. Bruining, *Bijdrage tot de Kennis van den Vedanta*, p. 19.

[2] *Essays*, i. p. 394.

[3] In his summary of the Vedanta system (*Christianity contrasted with Hindu Philosophy*, p. xxxi.) Prof. Ballantyne remarks: 'This conception

philosophy accustomed them to self-concentration, and whose highest intellectual attainment consisted of an abstraction so severe or a mysticism so exalted that consciousness, the distinguishing subject, might be said to have been utterly lost. A similar jealousy of the prerogative of Brahma as the unconditioned makes the Vedantist extremely cautious in ascribing to him attributes in the sense of qualities inhering in a substratum. They saw that a quality regarded as an essential characteristic was itself a determination, and therefore had in it a defining or limiting tendency. Accordingly they held that while all attributes of a first cause exist in Brahma, he is nevertheless 'devoid of qualities.'[1] It need scarcely be added that He is absolute in space and infinite in time; indeed these attributes imply each other, for the illimitable must of itself be eternal, while what is bounded may be temporary.[2]

Considered in relation to the phenomenal world, Brahma is the alone source and cause of all the varied energies that exist in the universe. Many are the analogies, similitudes, &c. by means of which the different powers and products of nature, as emanating from a single indivisible substance, are exemplified in illustration of Brahma's multifarious energies; the same soil, *e.g.* producing countless varieties of vegetation, the same clay moulded by the potter's manipulation into numberless diversities of forms. Not that Brahma can be influenced by material phenomena or by the qualities of matter, for in truth matter is an error, an anomaly, and the material world is an illusion, the unreal semblance of a vision which cannot deceive the man who is awake.[3]

of the possible nature of knowledge, *i.e.* its existence apart from any object known, is quite at variance with the European view, which regards knowledge as the synthesis of subject and object.' But he seems to have overlooked the fact that the synthesis may and often has in German transcendentalism assumed a form in which subject and object are completely merged in an indifference or identity, so that each becomes indistinguishable from the other. Nor in popular religious metaphysics, so far as they are represented by Hymnologists, is the Vedantist conception of a subject which is its own object unknown. Compare, *e.g.* the following lines from a well-known hymn in *Hymns Ancient and Modern*:

'When heaven and earth were yet unmade,
When Time was yet unknown,
Thou in Thy bliss of majesty
Didst live and love alone.'

[1] Bruining, *Bijdrage*, &c. p. 42. Colebrooke, *Essays*, i. p. 376.

[2] Bruining, *ibid.* Colebrooke, *Essays*, i. p. 385.

[3] 'De voorstelling der wereld is eene dwaling, een droombeeld; zij is

As the supreme source of all the phenomena and all the energies existing in the universe, Brahma is necessarily the cause of evil as well as of good. He must, therefore, be conceived as involuntarily controlled by some power superior to himself, as the Olympian Zeus was by fate; while another result of his diverse energizing, regarded from the standpoint of the contemplative observer, is his incomprehensibility. Hence it is said 'to him who knows him Brahma is unknown, he is known only to him who knows him not.'[1] Devout and conscious ignorance is thus the only suitable attitude for the Vedantist worshipper.

What is a noteworthy characteristic of the Vedanta, and one on which it differs from most of the chief schools of Hindu thought, is its doctrine as to human souls. These are regarded as parts of Brahma—to quote Colebrooke:[2] 'Individual souls, emanating from the supreme one, are likened to innumerable sparks issuing from a blazing fire. From him they proceed and to him they return, being of the same essence, the soul which governs the body together with its organs; neither is it born, nor does it die. It is a portion of the divine substance; and as such infinite, immortal, intelligent, sentient, true.

'It is governed by the supreme. Its activity is not of its essence, but inductive through its organs: as an artizan taking his tools labours and undergoes evil and pain, but laying them aside reposes, so is the soul active and a sufferer by means of its organs, but divested of them and returning to the supreme one, is at rest and is happy. It is not a free and independent agent, but made to act by the supreme one, who causes it to do in one state as it had purposed in a former condition. According to its predisposition for good or evil, for enjoined or forbidden deeds, it is made to do good or evil, and thus it has retribution for previous works. Yet Brahma is not the author of evil; for so it has been from eternity, the series of preceding forms, and of dispositions manifested in them, has been infinite.'

The soul is encased in body as in a succession of sheaths. The first or inner case is the intellectual, the next is the mental. The third is the organic or vital case; these three sheaths constitute the subtle frame—the Vedantist analogue of the 'subtle person' of the Sankhya philosophy—which attends the soul in its transmigrations. The gross body which it animates from birth to death in any step of its transmigrations is composed of the coarse elements,

een subjectief begrip van den geest, waaraan niets objectiefs beantwoordt." Bruining, *Bijdrage*, p. 45.

[1] Bruining, &c. p. 43.

[2] *Essays*, i. p. 395.

&c. The general tenor of Vedantist speculation may be inferred from these remarks. As a rule it is marked by extreme subtlety, by excessive subdivision, and by a predisposition to subordinate matter to spirit. Turning now to these freer features of the Vedanta which bring it within the scope of our subject, we find that it has a peculiar and elaborate theory of ignorance. Ignorance is the subjective form and collateral of matter. Brahma being intelligence and abstract existence, ignorance and matter are necessarily antagonistic entities. No doubt they are also inevitable on the hypothesis of a creation, for it is through ignorance that the creative energy of the Supreme Being is rendered possible.[1] 'Nor is it less inevitable for man, for without this ignorance the soul would know itself to be God, there would be nothing but God. There would be no world.'[2] It is, therefore, this ignorance that makes the world. 'Hence, it is defined as the potentia (in the Aristotelian sense) of the phenomenal world.'[3] The bearing of this conception on human knowledge is readily seen. Man, originally a portion of Brahma or infinite intelligence, finds in the actual world that his powers are circumscribed, his native proclivities thwarted by phenomena, and by the physical faculties which enable him to apprehend them. He becomes conscious that his soul is in bondage, and that the only mode of deliverance—his sole means of reunion with the primal source of Brahma—is its liberation from the trammels of matter.

The Vedantist starts therefore with the assumption that matter —the visible world—all his sensuous perceptions—are so many sources of error, fraud, and deceit. He must procure deliverance by a course of Skeptical repression and religious asceticism. His senses, all the elaborate physiological machinery which connects him with the outer world as an object of knowledge, he must learn to distrust. His appetites and emotions, everything that conjoins him with phenomena as objects of feeling, he must systematically repress. To his enlightened consciousness the world must present the appearance of an elaborate illusion, against whose glamour and deceptiveness he is required persistently to struggle. He must regard himself as a spectator watching the shifting scenes of a

[1] Bruining, &c. p. 49. [2] Ballantyne, *ut supra*, p. xxxiii.

[3] 'De onwetendheid wordt vervolgens gedefiniëerd als de *Potentia der phænomenale wereld* en is daardoor als het ware weder iets materiëels geworden. Door die onwetendheid wordt de scheppende werkzaamheid van het Opperwezen mogelijk gemaakt, want daardoor zijn in het hoogste wezen vereenigd de volmaakte rust, die zijn eigenlijk wezen vormt, en de werkende kracht, die onafscheidelijk met de illusie is verbonden.'—Bruining, p. 49 (who remarks on the similarity of Spinoza's doctrines), *note* 2.

theatre and in perpetual danger of mistaking them for actual events, or like a man who in sleep takes the illusions of dream-land for solid substantial realities.

The distinction between the Vedantist and the Greek Skeptic as to the distrust of ordinary knowledge, and the means of acquiring it common to each, is not far to find. The Hellenic thinker regarded it as a matter of philosophical caution. To the Hindu it appeared a solemn religious duty. With all his native aptitude for Skepticism, his keenness in discerning errors of sensuous perception or ratiocination, the Greek Skeptic, if we except Herakleitos as doubtful, never attained the sublime heights of disbelief in objective existence implied in the Maya of the Vedantists. Although the outer world might occasion mistakes in the observer, yet to the Greek it was real enough, indeed it constituted his only realm of reality. It was the world beyond the grave that he regarded as shadowy and unsubstantial; whereas to the Vedantist, as to the Christian mystic, the very opposite was the case. To him the march of terrestrial phenomena, the progress of events in his own personal experience, were all as unreal as the scenes of a phantasmagoria. He delighted to probe below the surface of phenomena and to reach the immanent spirit and reality underlying them—to get beneath the changes of time to the durable realm of eternity—as if they were really separable; to dive below the material universe into the fathomless depths of infinite space. Matter, his experience, quickened by religious fervour and transcendental aptitudes, assured him was subject to change, fluctuation, growth, and decay; he posited a spiritual entity liable to none of those vicissitudes. His own mental being was also the object of change, sensational, intellectual, and emotional, the plaything of an environment alien to its birth, constitution, and destiny; and he therefore endeavoured to merge it in the infinite being of reality. This, the attainment of Brahma, was the common haven of his intellectual search for immutable truth, of his ethical desire for supreme perfection, of his devotional aspiration for final union with the Supreme. He conceived it to be gained when the personal consciousness became indistinct, when the soul recognized herself s Brahma, when the boundary line between subject and object became lost in a hazy semi-consciousness capable of distinguishing nothing.[1] To effect this, the potent agencies of religious devotion, mental concentration, physical asceticism, were employed. Doubtless the result of these efforts was the submerging of the Hindu's physical environment in a diffused and misty indistinctness, resembling probably the waning

[1] Comp. Bruining, p. 85.

consciousness which a man feels when going to sleep. This condition, which was really due to impaired physical powers as well as to intense reflection within a very circumscribed area, presented itself to the Vedantist as a partaking of Brahma—the resolving of the individual soul into the All-spirit of the universe. It is the same stage which the Buddhist, with perhaps a truer perception of its real nature, characterized as Nirvana, in other words, annihilation.

Estimated from the intellectual standpoint of our own day, we cannot say that the Vedantist mysticism contains so many elements of mental freedom as some other types of thought we have investigated. It is greatly inferior, for instance, to the philosophical suspense of the Greek. Uncertainty, distrust of the phenomenal world, induced in the Greek an addition of mental energy. The perpetual equipoise of antagonisms kept his intellect in a state of healthy tension. The continued oscillation between affirmation and denial implied movement, and so far exercise, whereas doubt in the outer world was the Vedantist's mode of attaining mental passivity and somnolency. Still there remained the important fact that man's thought was constituted the supreme tribunal of truth and knowledge; that existence only existed—if the tautology be allowed—by means of its actual perception; that thought and being were conditional and commensurate each with the other. The starting-point was therefore individualistic and independent, whatever might be said of the mystical goal wherein it terminated.

The result of this rationalistic foundation may be further traced in other Vedantist conceptions. A peculiar stress on the text of the Veda was a distinguishing mark of this school of thought. Its utterances were regarded as the verbal cause of creation. It was an authoritative emanation from Brahma. But yet the independent standpoint of the Vedantists, their conception of the human soul as a part of Brahma, saved them from what might be termed Vedalatry. Hence they were not inclined to silence reason in the interests of Scripture, nor to take each single text as an authoritative *ipse dixit*, above question or criticism. Such a position would indeed have cut the ground from beneath the chief article of their creed—the identity of the human soul with Brahma. They therefore discriminated between spirit and letter, and refused to be bound by verbal fetters or to have their spiritual freedom nullified by textual restraints.[1]

Another result of a similar kind was the spiritualization of their

[1] Colebrooke, *Essays*, i. 375. Comp. Bruining, p. 28.

worship, its freedom from dogmatic and merely didactic propositions. To the highly cultivated, transcendental apperceptions of the Vedantist, the limitations of written language must have been as embarrassing as those derived from a material universe, and their worship seems to have been singularly free from tenets of a harsh and arbitrary character. It was also subjective in its nature, making its object, not interested interferences with the laws of the universe, but the religious edification of the worshipper. Even the denial of the free-will of the individual soul, and the ascription of all its acts to the Supreme Being, helped, together with the doctrine of its identity with Brahma, to confirm and intensify rather than repress its spiritual freedom.[1]

Nor, in enumerating the free aspects of Vedantism, must we leave out of consideration the effect of its belief in the soul's final perfection as a deliverance from all material restraints, and from the knowledge of matter which in reality was ignorance. It was something to have affirmed that redemption consisted in spiritual knowledge, and that by the cultivation of the mental faculties alone could men gain freedom and Brahma. No doubt the knowledge of the Vedantist was different from that which we understand by the term. Its tendencies were negative rather than positive, destructive rather than constructive, and its aim was a mystic passivity in which the individual appeared to be lost. But whatever disadvantages pertain to such a belief by reason of inordinate introspection, of intellectual numbness in its later stages, of defective physical energy, it possesses the advantages of maintaining the dignity of knowledge and humanity, and of counteracting dogmatism regarded as an ab-extra importation. These advantages, indeed, Vedantism shares with every system of idealism and introspective independence. In common with other Hindu modes of thought, it affords an illustration of the important part played by virtual Skepticism in every scheme of transcendental thought. Its ultimate issue, the complete interfusion of subject and object, of the human soul and Brahma, was a standpoint which, though dissimilar from other goals of Skepticism, *e.g.* the Ataraxia of the Greek Skeptic, was just as impatient of arbitrary and authoritative dictation from without. It was a dogma so far Skeptical that it was absolutely destructive of all dogmas excepting itself.

[1] We have the same causes productive of the same effects in the religious philosophy of Malebranche.

IV.

Although Buddhism is not generally classed among Hindu modes of thought, no sketch of Oriental Skepticism would be complete that took no account of what may claim to be its most striking manifestation. In Buddhism we are confronted with a scheme of dogmatic negation which is not only a system of philosophy, but one of the most widely extended of the religions of humanity. To me the phenomena seems the most remarkable in all the records of philosophical unfaith. In ancient Greece and in modern Europe we have unbelievers and Atheists as individuals, and occasionally in schools, but here is an elaborate scheme of the blankest negation which reckons as its adherents no less a number than four hundred and fifty-five million human beings. Nor is its extent as a principle of Negation less remarkable than its wide diffusion. The total suspense of the Greek Skeptic, the Free-thought of the Renaissance, the most negative among modern schemes of thought, all pale into utter insignificance compared with Buddhist Nihilism. All the schools of Hindu thought represent varying phases of doubt. We find in them denial of creation, of the Supreme Being, of ordinary modes of knowledge, of material existence; but in each case there is a reserve of belief in something, if in nothing else at least in infinite spirit and in human consciousness. But in Buddhism there is absolutely nothing left, or I should say absolute nothing alone is left. The universe is swept clean of all conceivable objects of faith, and a clearance no less complete is effected of all subjects of faith. The Buddhist has one deity, one sole object of contemplation, one sole article of belief, one motive of his energies, one single object of his aspiration, and that is—Nothingness. Whatever might be said of the unfitness of negative modes of thought for certain nations or epochs or under given circumstances, it can hardly be asserted in the face of Buddhism that negation even of an extreme kind cannot claim a prominent place among the convictions of humanity. Nor is our wonderment at such a phenomenon lessened when we come to investigate it further, for we find that so far from an utter denial of beliefs almost universally held among men operating detrimentally to Buddhists, it is indisputable that the religion of negation has contributed to the civilization and enlightenment of not a few of the Eastern races among whom it has been disseminated; while as to its effect on ethical practice, no religion, with the single exception of Christianity, has a purer code of morals than Buddhism. We may therefore regard it as the protest of history and of indisputable fact against the allegation so often made that morality is

under all circumstances and among all peoples so inseparably joined to definite theological beliefs that it cannot exist without their authentication and support.

The mythical but in many respects beautiful legend of Sakya Muni is too well known in modern literature to need recapitulation at our hands. A prince, inspired by the physical evils of humanity, especially by its liability to sickness, old age, and death, conceives the purpose of liberating his fellow-men from these various ills. Finding, however, that these are necessary incidents of existence, his project assumes the audacious but indisputably thorough form of minimizing their source, in other words, of suppressing those feelings, impulses, and energies which constitute the prominent features of vitality. He thus endeavours, and this is the main object of his teaching, to induce an emotional and intellectual passivity, a condition of self-negation hardly distinguishable from death. This is the more necessary because in common with other Hindu thinkers Sakya Muni also believes in the indefinite prolongation of existence by means of transmigrations. His conception of entire freedom is therefore a state of absolute extinction, which he calls Nirvana. We thus perceive that the Buddha's search was not so much for intellectual as for what he esteemed practical truth, the deliverance of men from the miseries of life and repeated births. No doubt existence presented itself to him as in a sense erroneous, not as being, like the Maya of the Vedantist, an illusion, but, in Schopenhauer's meaning, 'a uselessly interrupting episode in the blissful repose of nothingness.' Truth in Sakya Muni's conception was the synonym of absolute negation; for this alone was permanent and unchangeable. Every mode of existence being a departure from this truth was of necessity a falsehood. Hence the pursuits of mankind, their ideas, opinions, passions, and wishes, were proved to be false. They emphasized and rendered obtrusive the existence which was itself a lie, besides adding to its inevitable unhappiness. To a certain extent Sakya Muni endeavoured to divert all these human passions and desires by concentrating them on the nothingness which was the sole deity and heaven of his faith, but the concentration was in point of fact only another mode of repression. The disciple's culminating point of excellence was gained when the aspiration was lost in the nothingness it desired. The attempt, though impossible, was characterized by such inimitable daring, such a superb contempt for the ordinary convictions of mankind, that one cannot help admiring it. Undoubtedly there could be no error or pain or any other evil without existence. No expedient can be so effective in preventing visual error as destroying one's eyesight, and it is quite impossible for a man totally deaf to hear

falsely. All the misleading perceptions and inferences on which Greek and other Skeptics laid such stress had the ground cut from beneath them by such an unconditional negation as that of Sakya Muni's. If the negation propounded as a dogma really included itself, just as Greek Skepticism was held to involve its own self-destruction, that was a comparatively small matter. If it involved a palpable contradiction of sensation and consciousness, the consequence was still less. The aspirant after absolute nothingness might have grimly retorted that he had no wish to save from ultimate annihilation even his own dialectical weapons. Besides which, all philosophers, even those whose designs are not nihilistic but dogmatic, show an admirable capacity for ignoring both material and mental objections to their conclusions, and from their very standpoint Buddhist thinkers are peculiarly liable to charges of gross self-contradiction.

In the accomplishment of his mission—the preaching of the gospel of extinction—the great Indian Liberator had to oppose the influence of the Brahmans, and especially to break the yoke of the dogmatic and ritual chains by which they had so long held the minds of the people in slavery. From the Brahmanical point of view, he is, therefore, a Skeptic and a Free-thinker, one who opposed himself to the religious usages and traditions of his ancestors, while he in return characterized his foes as hypocrites, charlatans, the interested protectors of error, fraud, and ignorance. Not that Buddhism differed from Brahmanism as to their common possession of the starting-points of all Hindu speculation. Both agreed, *e.g.* as to existence being an evil, as to the supreme necessity of deliverance from it, not only in the present but in the future. They differed only as to the best means of accomplishing this object. The Brahmans inculcated sacrifices, ritual observances, implicit submission to the text of the Vedas, a deferential regard to their own priestly traditions, and a profound reverence for their sacred persons—in a word, they enjoined those ideas, principles, and tendencies which are usually comprised in the term sacerdotalism. Sakya Muni, on the other hand, starting from the standpoint of a moralist and philosopher, demanded self-discipline, the forcible suppression of all passions and desires, whatever disturbed the even current of existence. To attain this he devised a routine of singular efficacy for his purposes, derived from his own experience and indicating a profound acquaintance with the motives which mostly govern human conduct. He suggested to his disciples self-imposed austerities and incessant contemplation. There was thus a radical difference between the dependence on

the external means, offices, and persons which the Brahmans taught and the self-reliant individualism which formed a main principle of Buddhist thought. Another important distinction between them belongs to their modes of promulgating their respective creeds. The Brahmans, like all ancient sacerdotal castes, adopted the high authoritative tone becoming their profession of being the exclusive possessors of divine revelation, whereas Sakya Muni propagated his doctrine by preaching,[1] or in other words by reasoned persuasion. This is one among several points of similarity in which he has been likened to the Protestant Reformers in their attitude against Roman Catholicism. Nor was it only against the dominant priesthood that Sakya Muni waged his war of liberation. To a very large extent the movement he initiated was more social than religious. His repudiation of the caste system, both directly and indirectly, was perhaps the most important declaration of human equality that India had ever received.[2] Nor was his doctrine of human liberty less effective against the tyranny of Indian princes.[3] Even his main position of the evil of existence and the desirability of its termination, however benumbing to the energies of the individual believer, was clearly a manifestation of hostility to 'the powers *that be*,' and hence indirectly subserved the cause of human freedom. There was also in Buddhism the distinction of superior disinterestedness (another point of resemblance to the Protestant Reformation). Instead of being indebted for spiritual guidance and final emancipation to the interested and well-paid labours of the priesthood, his followers had to achieve their deliverance by their own unaided efforts. His apostles were all like himself mendicants, but even in the pursuit of their calling were rigidly forbidden to ask for alms or food. Quite in harmony with the entire mental independence fostered by Buddhism is its rejection of the Vedas.[4] I do not mean that, like the Sankhya and even the Vedanta, it made free with the sacred text, for it went further and denied unreservedly its authoritative character. Instead of this, Buddhists took the personal teaching of their founder as their standard of faith. It may be granted that the personal authority of Sakya Muni assumed after a time an unduly dogmatic aspect, but no one who knows the influence of the Vedas on orthodox Hindu thought

[1] Burnouf, in his *Introduction à l'Histoire du Buddhisme*, p. 194, points out that Sakya Muni was the first Indian teacher who made disciples by preaching.

[2] Burnouf, *Introd.* pp. 149–51.

[3] Comp. Burnouf, *Introd.* p. 199.

[4] Burnouf, *Introd.* p. 547.

will dispute that the rejection of its divine authority in the narrow sense in which it was affirmed by the Brahmans was essentially a contribution to mental and religious freedom.

Thus, whatever its defects as an instrument of culture and civilization as we understand the terms, we must allow that most of the elementary principles of Buddhism operated in the direction of liberty and in opposition to Dogma. Like Kapila, from whom he perhaps derived his Free-thinking and Skeptical inspiration, Sakya Muni occupies in Hindu speculation an analogous position to that of Sokrates in Hellenic philosophy. He is a protester against the religious creed and the social system and traditions of his country. He conceives and promulgates his teaching in the interests of his fellow-men, for Sakya Muni is moved by the pain as Sokrates is by the false knowledge of mankind. Both agree also in making the individual his own self-centre of knowledge, distrusting and dissolving as much as possible the connecting links of sensation which join him to the outer world, concentrating his thought on his inner being, and thus preparing the way for the self-absorption of extreme idealism in the case of the Greek, and for Nirvana in that of the Buddha. Buddhism thus made the emancipation of humanity the supreme aim of its efforts; and if it carried this notion of freedom far beyond the limits of Greek and Hindu thought, even to the extent of making it synonymous with extinction, this was an error necessitated by the Hindu standpoint, and the Pessimism which lay at the root of all their thought. Buddhism is indeed only the logical outcome of Indian speculation, and Nirvana itself only a stage or two beyond the termini of most other lines of Hindu philosophy. Nor is it unimportant to notice the similarity of methods by which Sokrates arrived at his suspense, and Sakya Muni attained Nirvana. In both cases the progress was through knowledge. Sokrates taught that the advance of healthy knowledge involved a growing conviction of ignorance, and in this conviction when complete he found the highest wisdom. Such a condition he described in his own case as knowledge of nothing. Similarly, by concentrated thought and devout contemplation, Sakya Muni attained a mental vacuity still more profound, one in which not merely conscious knowledge but life itself appeared extinguished. So that the nothing in which the research of the Greek thinker ended became intensified and, if the paradox be allowed, embodied in the entity or non-entity—nothingness, as it was conceived by Sakya Muni.

But though the final scope of Buddhism be thus a negation so

blank as to be almost beyond the limits of conceivability, like so many other systems of a negative kind, it is based upon dogmatism. The four primary tenets which may be said to form the creed of the Buddhist are: 1. Existence of pain; 2. The passions and desires partake of pain; 3. Pain ceases by Nirvana; while the 4th sets forth the road or means of arriving at Nirvana. These are the bases of the Buddhist faith, and this is its mode of affirming the indecomposable facts of consciousness. Pain, with its concomitants of intense feeling and perception, was to Sakya Muni the equivalent of sensation, and therefore of life. Indeed, the Pessimistic views of existence which he shared with most other Hindu thinkers served to make the painful aspect of life more familiar than any other. He would perhaps have slightly modified the Cartesian axiom, and instead of saying, 'Cogito, ergo sum,' would have said, 'I feel pain, therefore I exist.' Of course consciousness is in either case the elementary principle, which is assumed for the time being to be proof to analysis, though the Ego beyond which Descartes thought it impossible to go was only a transition stage in the Buddha's subtle and daring progress to self-extinction.

But as a starting-point existence was the problem which the Buddha set himself to solve, and the solution of which he found in annihilation. Not that he regarded the problem from the physicist point of view, whence the most eminent thinkers of Greece attacked it. To Sakya Muni as to other Indian philosophers all existence was merged in humanity. All life was only human life in a variety of forms, and the individual life of man was but a unit in an infinite numerical series. This fact made the study of human existence of paramount importance. One of the earliest forms of Buddhist faith describes the different categories or stages of being which are supposed to stand to each other in relation of cause to effect. They are as follows: 1. Ignorance or Nothingness; 2. Concepts or Ideas; 3. Consciousness; 4. Name and Form; 5. Six seats of sensible qualities and manas (heart); 6. Contact; 7. Sensation; 8. Desire; 9. Attachment; 10. Birth; 11. Existence; 12. Old Age and Death. The series is remarkable, not only as manifesting the psychological acuteness which distinguishes all Hindu thought, but because the first nine, which represent progressive stages in human knowledge, are regarded as conditions of existence, and hence made to precede birth. This is in harmony with the Buddhist theory, that a man's actual life, even when terminated by Nirvana, is only the last of an infinite number of existences which he has already passed

through. These twelve categories, with the four primary truths already mentioned, make up the whole of the dogmatic system of early Buddhism. In reality, however, Buddhism is a creed of one article. Categories of existence by the very nature of the case can have only a subordinate interest for persons whose main belief as well as chief aspiration is non-existence. At most such articles of faith are only like the basis of many another doubting and negative belief, intended to be provisional, and to give way before the destructive issues it eventually raises. Indeed, few creeds contain more contradictions and divergent principles than Buddhism.

There seems a curious parallel in the circumstance that a free inquiring anti-dogmatic movement opposed to the popular creed should in India, as in Greece, be associated with a reformed code of morals, and that in both instances Ethics should assert its authority independently of religious sanctions. Just as Sokrates taught that virtue was itself supreme and needed no adventitious sanction from any external or supernatural authority, so Kapila and Sakya Muni both insisted on the strict performance of all human duties without the acknowledgment of a deity. It is no doubt true that the Hindu thinkers did not rise to those heights of unconditional morality to which other philosophers, *e.g.* Sokrates and Kant, attained. Kapila inculcated virtue as a means of emancipating the soul from the shackles of matter, and Barthélemy St. Hilaire well sums up the scope of Buddhism in the words: 'It guides men to eternal salvation, or rather to the nothingness which it confounds with it, by the road of virtue, knowledge, and austerities.'[1] No doubt to our minds the cultivation of virtue as a means and path to nothingness does not present itself as an incentive of a very forcible kind; but to the Hindu, with impatience of existence so deeply engrained in his character, it was clearly a highly efficient persuasive. For this reason Buddhism must be admitted to have a deficient sense of virtue and goodness *considered as their own ends*.[2] With this abatement we must allow the substantive excellence of Buddhist Ethics. Of its founder St. Hilaire remarks: 'Je n'hésite pas à ajouter que, sauf le Christ tout seul, il n'est point, parmi les fondateurs de religion, de figure plus pure ni plus touchante que celle du Bouddha. Sa vie n'a point de tache. Son constant héroïsme égale sa conviction; et si la théorie qu'il préconise est fausse, les exemples personnels qu'il donne sont irréprochables. Il est le modèle achevé de toutes les vertus qu'il

[1] *Le Bouddha et sa Religion*, p. 142.

[2] Comp. B. St. Hilaire, *ut supra*, p. 154.

prêche; son abnégation, sa charité, son inaltérable douceur, ne se dementent point un seul instant,'[1] &c.; and of the system which Sakya Muni founded a still more eminent authority[2] informs us that 'its moral code taken by itself is one of the most perfect which the world has ever known.' 'It is difficult to comprehend,' says a distinguished French writer, 'how men not assisted by revelation could have soared so high and approached so near to the truth.' 'Besides the five commandments,' to quote Max Müller, 'not to kill, not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to lie, not to get drunk, every shade of vice, hypocrisy, anger, pride, suspicion, greediness, gossiping, cruelty to animals, is guarded against by special precepts. Among the virtues recommended, we find not only reverence of parents, care for children, submission to authority, gratitude, moderation in time of prosperity, submission in time of trial, equanimity at all times, but virtues unknown in any heathen system of morality, such as the duty of forgiving insults and not rewarding evil with evil. All virtues, we are told, spring from Maitrî, and this Maitri can only be translated by charity or love.'[3] A peculiarity of this charity in Buddhist teaching is its free extension to the whole of humanity. This was the motive-principle by which it was enabled to subvert for a time the iniquitous and tyrannical caste-system,[4] and therewith to effect the greatest social revolution ever experienced in India. Nor among Buddhist virtues must we forget to enumerate the detestation of lying in all its phases which it inculcates.

But it is not with its moral excellences so much as its philosophical conclusions that we are at present concerned. Buddhism has given rise to many types of Negation, as we might indeed have anticipated from its apotheosis of annihilation, for we reach in the Nirvana of the Buddhist the culminating point of negative doubt, just as in the Greek suspense we attain the extreme point of pure Skepticism. The contrast between the two, as I have already remarked, is instructive, especially in its bearing on the characteristics of the race to which they severally belong. To the Greek every aspect of nature and life was replete with activity and enjoyment. In the free exercise of his mental faculties he found as great delight as in the physical contests of the palæstra. His Ataraxia or philosophic serenity consisted in the equipoising

[1] *Le Bouddha et sa Religion*, Introd. p. v.

[2] Max Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, i. p. 220.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 221.

[4] Comp. Burnouf, *Introd.* p. 205. B. St. Hilaire, *Le Bouddha*, &c. pp. 144, 145.

of discrepant and antagonistic beliefs. The Hindu, on the other hand, regarded all nature and existence as an unmitigated evil, to be minimized, thwarted, and repressed, or else escaped from with all possible celerity. His highest attainment and greatest delight was a state not of stolid but intelligent passivity. It was one of the many inconsistencies in his mode of thought that he thus attempted to unite what was really incompatible—the acquisition by knowledge, study, and contemplation of an immobility close akin to intellectual inanition. No doubt it was the appetitive part of his being that he was especially desirous of subduing—the desires, passions, impulses, and volitions that disturbed his equanimity; but such a treatment based upon physical austerities must in reality have affected his intellectual powers. The placid serenity and passionless quietude attained by a persistent repression of all vital energy is only purchasable at a cost of some portion of vitality itself. Indeed, perfect Nirvana is synonymous with death, or rather with extinction. There was, however, an inferior kind in the power of the living. This consisted in the imperturbable calm generated by asceticism and devout contemplation. The Buddhist employed all his efforts to force the different currents of his sensations and passions into one single channel. Shutting eyes and ears to the outer world, he concentrated all his faculties of mind and body on the contemplation of eternal nothingness. The tension of abstraction by which he was able to accomplish this has scarce a parallel in the history of human thought. It was not that he was able to conceive nothingness as an independent entity so much as that he took from all existing objects within his cognizance the attribute of existence. Thus wherever he saw matter, he conceived empty space, while all existing beings he imagined as non-existing, even himself with his consciousness, experience, &c. he reckoned as not really living, but as merely possessing so much vitality of a vague kind as enabled him to affirm his actual non-existence. With his perpetual austerities and depressed energies he had little difficulty in reaching such a stage of semi-animation. We must suppose that knowledge in the sense of mental conviction partook of this physical inanition. Indeed, whatever its advantages in inducing such a view of existence and of the perpetual transmigrations to which all living beings were subject as would justify the disgust with life which was the Primum Mobile of Buddhist speculation, as a qualification for final extinction knowledge was quite superfluous. To the Buddhist, as to his distant relative the Hebrew Koheleth, there was no device nor knowledge in the grave. Moreover, as forming part of existence by

being an attribute of human beings, knowledge itself was tainted with the pollution which attached to everything living.

It is needless to insist on the theoretical completeness of the Skeptical negation of Buddhism and its Nirvana. A Skepticism which destroys everything and which believes only in nothingness is clearly the *ne plus ultra* of negative thought. Nor is it any tangible objection to such an hypothesis that it is self-destructive. This the Buddhist would willingly allow; nay more, he would regard the fact as a confirmation of his doctrine. For if he admitted the proofs of his own existence to be beyond question, he would be positing in the realm of nothingness a demonstrable existence, in other words, he would be destroying it. Whatever seemed to him to exist went no further than mere seeming. The world itself was in this respect only a gigantic unveracity, in which the ignorant might possibly believe, but which the enlightened saw in its true character of inaneness and vacuity—to use the favourite Hindu simile—like the hollow of a drum. Pure Skeptics, as we have seen, did not carry their unbelief beyond the limits of their own consciousness. It was they themselves who were unable to discover truth; of the powers of others they dared not predicate dogmatically. Pyrrhonists, advancing a stage further, maintained truth to be indiscoverable, not only by themselves but by all beings similarly constituted. But Buddhism advanced far beyond both: it took away the standpoint of the Skeptic by denying his consciousness, while to the Pyrrhonist's denial of truth it replied by a denial of everything. The ordinary 'common sense' of humanity might well stand aghast at a negation so absolutely blank, at a vacuity so universal. Were it not for the evidence which the history of philosophy affords of the power of the intellect under given circumstances to eliminate whatever is inconvenient or disagreeable from the sphere of its convictions, added to the peculiar facility with which the Hindu passed from matter to spirit, and from spirit to matter, without apparently recognizing any inherent distinction between them, such a measureless negation would seem impossible. But for my part I have no difficulty in believing that, as a result of the various means they employed for the purpose, the persuasion of nothingness as the sole existence was really attained, and conscientiously held. What seem to us contradictions between the belief of the Buddhist and the volitions, acts, and perceptions of his ordinary life were evidently not contradictions for him. With an introspective power maintained by constant exercise at a high rate of activity and comprehension, he contrived, as did also the

Vedantist, so to discount and subtilize the factors of his personal existence that the outer world was for him just as shadowy and phantasmal as a scene of dreamland. It is usual to compare with this super-subtle thought of the Buddhist the efforts and aims of Christian mystics, and with the Nirvana of the former the ecstasy of the latter, but there seems to me a radical distinction between them. The object of the Buddhist was to realize and rest in nothingness. The mystic, on the contrary, aspired to lose his being in God regarded as a living personality. The first was a passion for death, the second for higher and fuller life. On the individuality of the persons concerned perhaps the effects were not very dissimilar. In each case we may assume that if not lost it was half-merged in a vague, diffused sentiment, as well as sustained by methods of a more or less violent and artificial kind.

We are now in a position to estimate roughly the relation which Hindu speculation has to Hebrew and Hellenic thought. It may be said to combine the special attributes of both, for it unites the religiousness of the Hebrew with the philosophical acumen of the Greek. As a rule, its methods and objects of research are presented as sacred duties. It asserts the noble principle of Scotus Erigena: 'Philosophy is true religion, and religion true philosophy.' To the old Hebrew thinker in the most flourishing period of the theocracy knowledge was regarded as a curse, a malign importation of the adversary of the Hebrew Jahve; while all the Hindu schools regarded it as a means of emancipation from the great curse of perpetual existence. At a later period the pessimism of Koheleth, the conviction that the pursuit of truth and of pleasure are equally vanity, furnishes a closer approximation to Hindu and especially to Buddhist thought. This is as close a similarity as could be expected from two systems starting from such divergent principles. The Monotheism of the Hebrews and the general Atheism of Hindu speculation furnished more occasions of contrast than of resemblance.

I have already touched incidentally on the relation of Hindu to Hellenic thought. Both the Indian and Greek philosopher took existence for their object of speculation, but they approached it from different directions. The latter regarded existence as a pleasurable but inevitable fact, with which he was compelled to bring his theories and speculations, so far as practicable, into harmony. Such an agreement when attainable constituted truth. If it could not be attained, as the Skeptic thought, a point of indifference might be established, which, while allowing the un-

deniable facts of existence, might cease to dogmatize on theories relating to it. But the Hindu saw in existence not so much an insoluble problem intellectually as a painful illusion in actual practice. Truth for him consisted in the permanence which he identified with nothingness. No material phenomenon, no result of human ratiocination, no kind of ordinary existence appealed to him with such absolute authority as the voiceless whisper of the Eternal silence. Nirvana—absolute extinction—formed his sole conception of Ataraxia or philosophic quietude. The means employed by the Buddhist to attain the former were no doubt similar to those which the Pyrrhonist adopted to acquire the latter. If the Greek discovered that his senses were unreliable and deceptive, so also did the Hindu. If the one affirmed the dependence of thought on sensation, so also did the other. Both Greek Pyrrhonist and Hindu philosopher reverenced knowledge, but both considered it as a means, not the end. Through knowledge, said the Greek, we attain to a consciousness of Nescience. By knowledge, said the Hindu, I attain annihilation. It might even be said that both goals are on the same road, only the Hindu traversed it further than did the Hellene. For conscious Nescience the feeling 'I know nothing' must certainly precede in logical sequence the conviction 'I am nothing.' But although there exist this similarity between the two methods of thought, although the Nescience of Sokrates and the Ataraxia of Pyrrhôn are both of them allied to the Nirvana of the Buddhist and the persuasion of non-existence of the Sankhya philosopher, there remains a notable distinction in respect of the feelings which accompany the two tendencies. It would hardly be too much to say that the Nescience and Ataraxia of Greek thinkers were products among other causes of their optimism. The calm serenity with which they enjoyed existence made them *indifferent* to the fact that most of the problems connected with it were insoluble, whereas all the efforts of the Hindus were prompted by a profound dislike of existence and an ardent desire to escape from it. The vehement repression of vitality required to attain Nirvana may serve as a measure of the strength of this feeling. Thus we have Skepticism enlisted in the services of optimism on the one hand and extreme pessimism on the other. Nor is this an isolated instance, I may add, of its discharge of functions not only divergent from but opposed to each other.

All writers on Buddhism are agreed that its influence on the whole has been salutary on the various races and peoples that have come under it. Its temporary sway in India had the effect

of freeing its people from a peculiarly galling chain of sacerdotal oppression and tyranny. Wherever it has obtained ascendency it has humanized and refined Oriental races to a remarkable extent. It has quelled in many cases their savage and revengeful passions, has instilled gentleness and forbearance, mutual kindness and sympathy: in a word, has adapted them for social and national existence in a way that no other instrumentality would have done. That it has not had the effect of infusing industrial or civilizing energies, as we should understand these qualities, into the dormant temperaments of Eastern races, can scarcely be termed a defect. The utmost we can expect of any religious or philosophical system is that it should operate upon the natural lines of the instincts and inborn qualities of those subjected to its power, that it should foster those susceptibilities and develop those qualities that are worthiest of such treatment. This, it seems clear, Buddhism has successfully accomplished. On the other hand, I am far from denying that the extreme negation which is the main feature of Hindu speculation is at all free from the objections that seem to attach to every scheme of dogmatic negation. The remarks on this point I have already made *à propos* of Pyrrhonic negation apply with tenfold force to the yet more extreme negation of Hindu philosophy, and particularly of Buddhism. The dogma of individual or universal extinction, whatever amount of wholesome Skepticism it may imply, must be regarded as a bar to human inquiry, and thereby to all intellectual progress; and its influence in this respect will be the greater inasmuch as its scope is practical no less than speculative. Pyrrhonist negation, as we saw, was entirely speculative, and therefore exercised little effect for good or ill on the purely practical concerns of life. But the case was different as respects Hindu negation. Here the denial of the facts of existence was transformed into an imperative duty, a matter of persistent daily practice. It was erected into a cult, and thus invested with inviolable sanctions and sacred authority. It also appealed to the strongest desire of the Hindu—complete deliverance from existence. Little as we may appreciate the force of such motives, we know that they are peculiarly powerful among certain Oriental races. Bearing these facts in mind, we can realize, at least approximately, the wide-ranging and deeply seated nature of Hindu negation, and are able to comprehend why all the great Hindu schools of thought terminate either in extinction or in some form of self-absorption hardly distinguishable from it.

The general considerations pertaining to our subject I have already incidentally touched upon. I. We may note the strange peculiarity of intellect which regards with instinctive repugnance

the fact of existence, with all its inevitable concomitants. The sensations, perceptions, &c. usually most accredited among men seem to provoke in the Hindu a spontaneous feeling of doubt and contradiction. So far as this describes the genuine Skeptical impulse there can be no question as to the prevalence of Hindu Skepticism. We must allow that the sentiment is emotional as well as intellectual, perhaps even more so. How far the resultant pessimism is to be ascribed to climatic causes, to excessive and morbid idealism, or else to the intellectual excitation that undoubtedly accompanied the rise of Hindu philosophy, is a large question we cannot enter upon. That pessimistic views of life are closely allied to intellectual doubt is a truth to which both Hebrew and Hindu thought bear witness, and is largely attested by other examples in the history of philosophy—indeed the connection is in itself quite easy of comprehension; but the peculiarity in the case of Hindus is that the pessimism, the contempt for and disgust of life, seems to have engendered both the philosophic inquiry and the final negation in which it issued, instead of the more usual course of the despair of truth resulting in a despair of existence.

II. Next in importance we must place the witness of Hindu speculation to the effect of idealistic tendencies in inducing Skepticism. That idealism possesses this tendency, even when it is based on positive grounds and leads up to positive conclusions, as, *e.g.* in the case of mysticism and pantheism, is a well-known fact. Coleridge once remarked[1] on the benefit a study of Behmen's works conferred on him by preventing his imprisonment within the outline of any given dogma; and examples of similar latitude induced by idealism will meet us in the course of our investigations. But if this characteristic attaches to positive idealism, it is evident that the transcendentalism which is so far free of dogma that it denies and repudiates all material existence, and asserts annihilation as the sole article of its unfaith, is still more libertine in its scope and method. The masterly facility with which Hindu thinkers involved both matter and spirit in one homogeneous, or at least undifferentiated, substratum—spiritualizing the material and materializing the spiritual—gives the key to many apparent anomalies in their mode of thought, and conclusively testifies to their appreciation of intellectual freedom. The mental liberty which annihilates space and time, which is not impeded by the conditions and facts of ordinary existence, which is equally at home with material concepts and the most impalpable of human abstractions, discerning no difference between them, is one which cannot con-

[1] *Biographia Literaria*, p. 144.

ceivably be transcended. Other idealists, at least in European countries, think it necessary to apologize when their ethereal flights leave the duller intellects of ordinary humanity far in arrear. But the Hindu transcendentalist does not think this needful, nor apparently do his fellow-countrymen look for such consideration from his hands. They do not for a moment dispute that omnipotence of the human, or at least Hindu, intellect which, like a magician's wand, transforms matter to spirit, and being to nothingness, at will.

III. Our natural astonishment at the excessive negation of all Hindu thought is much lessened when we remember the forcible means adopted for attaining and developing it. All philosophical effort, be its direction what it may, is accompanied by, and dependent upon, mental discipline and repressive measures of a certain kind. The materialist, *e.g.* minimizes and adapts to his own hostile purposes metaphysical facts, just as the idealist attenuates the truths of physical existence. But no modification of alien influences, no coercion of adverse materials, no concentration of mind and body on one single object, can be conceived so efficiently adapted for its purpose as the general discipline of Hindu thought. Hindu philosophers have clearly understood better than any other thinkers the almost infinite plasticity of the human mind. They appear to have acted on the principle that no belief is inherently impossible to the intellect if the proper means of acquiring it are adopted and pursued irrespective of consequences. Let me read you, for instance, a few sentences from the 'Bhagavad-Gita,' which describes the perfect man according to the Hindu ideal of him. 'He who without hopes (of reward) restrains his own thoughts, abandons all that he possesses, and renders his actions merely corporeal, does not incur sin. Contented with what he receives fortuitously, superior to the influence of opposites, without envy, the same in success and failure, even though he acts he is not bound by the bonds of action. The entire action of a man who is free from self-interest and devoted, whose thoughts are directed by spiritual knowledge, and who acts for the sake of sacrifice, is as it were dissolved. . . . Some devotees attend to the sacrifice of the deities only; others offer sacrifice by the action of worship only in the fire of the Supreme Being. Some sacrifice the sense of hearing and the other senses in the fires of restraint; some offer objects of sense, such as sound, in the fires of the senses; and others sacrifice all actions of the senses and of vitality in the fire of devotion through self-restraint, which is kindled by spiritual knowledge. Others also sacrifice by their wealth, or by mortification, by devotion, by silent study and spiritual knowledge, being subdued in

their passions and faithful to their vows. Some also sacrifice inspiration of breath in expiration, and expiration in inspiration, by blocking up the channels of inspiration and expiration, desirous of retaining their breath. Others, by abstaining from food, sacrifice life in their life,'[1] &c. Without attempting an explanation of these hyper-mystical utterances, and merely insisting on their general tenor, it is clear that this passage—one of a thousand similar ones which might be adduced—expresses a self-renunciation, a completeness of negation, a self-absorption which would make Nirvana itself a possible attainment. We have here the abstraction of the idealist, the earnestness of the religionist, the austerity of the ascetic, the rapt contemplation of the mystic, and the exaggerated intensity of the fanatic all combined as coefficients of negation. There is indeed a deadly determination in impugning the facts of phenomenal and individual existence which nothing can resist. And this constitutes the peculiarity of Hindu negative Skepticism. In Greece we find Skepticism (including both suspense and negation) as a philosophy. Among the Hebrews it is an evanescent outcome of theocratic faith, but among Orientals it is consecrated to a cult with its own form and ideal of worship, and which numbers among its adherents more than all the positive religions of the world taken together.

. . . . . .

ARUNDEL. One obvious criticism, Doctor, to which the Hebrew half of your paper seemed to me open, was your determination to pose the writers of Job and Koheleth as modern philosophers instead of considering them from their sole legitimate standpoint of Jewish theologians. As a consequence you failed to appreciate the root-thought both of Job and the Preacher. This might, I think, be described in the definition of human wisdom propounded by the former, 'Unto man he said, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.' I submit that the only idea of knowledge professed by an average Jew was what we should call religious or ethico-religious knowledge, and his certitude in this appears to me quite as distinctly

[1] *Bhagavad-Gita*, Thompson's trans. pp. 33, 34. Comp. B. St. Hilaire, p. 160, and see on the discipline of the Dyana, Burnouf, *Introd.* &c. p. 168; *Le Lotus de la Bonne Loi*, pp. 347 and 800; Banerjea's *Dialogues on the Hindu Philosophy*, p. 263, &c.

marked in the later as in the earlier books of the Bible. You have not in my opinion shown us anything approaching that pronounced definitive doubt which can alone claim the designation of Skepticism. Occasional vacillations or uncertainties are merely the homage which the immensity, variety, and complexity of natural phenomena exact from every thinking man, and they no more favour inveterate doubt than an occasional ailment demonstrates chronic disease. Hence you were led to exaggerate incidental expressions of impatience, and to elevate wayward words to the rank of sustained permanent convictions. No doubt Job's discontent at what seems an exceptionally cruel fate is freely expressed, but it involves a total misapprehension of the purport of the book to make these accidental utterances of individual suffering generally received modifications in the national faith. Besides, all fervent religionists affect what appears to outsiders an undue familiarity with the Deity and an excessive liberty in criticising His acts. You remember, for instance, their ludicrous claim of insight into the motives of God's providential dealings and their language of menace when the Royal cause seemed prospering, which characterized the Puritan leaders in the English Revolution.

TREVOR. I am rather surprised at your criticism, Arundel. You must be aware that there is an enormous consensus of Biblical authorities in favour of the position I advanced, viz. that Job and Koheleth both indicate a waning faith in the old theocratic dogma of the Jews. I have already admitted that these writers fall back to a certain extent upon the unconditional affirmation of religious duty, and in this respect resemble other Free-thinkers; but you must confess that their speculative wanderings before settling down in this final conclusion are of quite a Free-thinking character. You must also bear in mind that in the case of a people like the Jews, whose whole creed and mode of thought were religious, as you rightly remarked, the evidence for an impaired or undermined belief may well be less than would be necessary in the case of a more comprehensive or more varied philosophy. We may, I think, accept it as an axiom that belief is emphasized in proportion to the narrowness of

its area, whence it will follow that an expression of doubt which might be unimportant when the range of conviction is large, becomes very significant when it is exceedingly limited. That a rigid monotheist, *e.g.* should question those attributes which constitute the very being of his Deity is for him almost the *ne plus ultra* of Doubt. Mistrust of Providence in its especial theocratic aspect really cut the ground from beneath the whole fabric of Jewish thought and life, and this, I contend, is strongly marked in Job and Koheleth.

HARRINGTON. For my part I question whether the field of Jewish speculation was really so limited as you would make it. The persistent efforts of legislators and prophets to confine all Hebrew ideas within the bounds of their intellectually speaking narrow monotheism, as well as the inculcation of the most revolting treachery and cruelty on the faintest suspicion of apostasy from the national creed, seem to me to point at something more than those occasional deviations towards idol-worship which are recorded in Hebrew history. There may easily have been inquiring tendencies and Ethic speculations of which we have no trace in Hebrew literature, previous to the time when Job and Koheleth were written, and of which these works are accidental expressions. The latter book seems to me quite unjewish. The writer possesses all the attributes of a Gentile philosopher of a free type—thirst for knowledge, eagerness, and it must be added unscrupulousness, in its acquisition, and dissatisfaction with it when acquired.

MRS. HARRINGTON. With reference to another part of Dr. Trevor's paper, I must confess to a doubt whether the hostility of the Jewish mind to all secular knowledge was so great as Dr. Trevor's interpretation of the narrative of the Fall would seem to imply. Moses, *e.g.* is praised for being learned in all the wisdom of Egypt, which I presume was to a great extent secular, and Solomon's botanical lore is adduced as a part of his wisdom. The designers of the Tabernacle and the workmen of the Temple are also eulogized. Besides which, the Book of Proverbs is largely taken up with the praise of wisdom, which certainly included more than its theological aspect of service rendered to God, if at least one

may rely on the translation of the oft-occurring words 'prudence' and 'discretion.'

TREVOR. No doubt you have incidental references to the worth of knowledge, especially when of a practical kind, but these are too scattered and unimportant to be taken as the ordinary mode of thought of the Jews. I am still of opinion that there was in the Hebrew mind, partly but not altogether in consequence of natural inaptitude, a decided mistrust of all speculation and research, and that this temper of mind was fostered by all the theocratic leaders of the nation, whether religious or political. Nor indeed do I see how the case could have been otherwise. The principle of a theocracy is as adverse to human knowledge and independent investigation as that of its ally, sacerdotalism. In both cases the inquirer is confronted at every step with an authoritative assumption of Divine knowledge which renders further research impertinent if not useless. The oracular utterances of Hebrew seers, *e.g.* were asserted as so many ultimate decisions which admitted of no argument and could not be gainsayed. I am, however, of opinion that Skepticism and Pessimism are late developments of Hebrew thought, at least I can discern no adequate grounds for Harrington's suggestion that Free-thought may have obtained currency before the times of Job and Koheleth. The extreme jealousy of alien worship and the revolting cruelty sanctioned against those who, however innocently, practised it, of which he speaks, are amply accounted for by the inherent exclusiveness of Jewish monotheism. They are unavoidable results of theocratic institutions and modes of thought.

MISS LEYCESTER. Hebrew Skepticism—the dissent from doctrines claiming the character of Divine Revelation—gives us a foretaste of the dissonance which we shall have more prominently brought before us in Christian Skepticism. The moral in both cases appears to be the ultimate inadequacy of any scheme of Revelation to satisfy the inquiring instincts of humanity when its doctrines are not in complete harmony with the laws of nature and the teachings of human experience. . . . As to Hindu Free-thought, I own I feel puzzled at its multitudinous, many-sided aspects. It

appears to me to contain germs or developed growths of every philosophy that has ever existed. Not its least strange feature is the starting-point usually assigned to it. I want to ask Dr. Trevor if he agrees with the opinion that all Hindu speculation has been engendered by a disgust of existence.

TREVOR. I do not. The most ancient religion of India —that of the oldest section of the Veda—seems to have been a kind of Nature-worship, and the earliest hymns in which it is expressed are as joyous and buoyant and as strongly marked by optimism as some of the Hebrew psalms. The general change of this mood of thought to ontology, negation, and pessimism is not easy to account for. Brahmanic sacerdotalism, with its stress upon certain ideal teachings, especially upon the continuity of existence implied in the doctrine of transmigration, seems to me to have been a co-operating cause. But the pessimism which underlies all Hindu belief must have had some predisposing causes in the general environment of the people, and among others perhaps the debilitating effect of the climate might claim some consideration.

HARRINGTON. We must be careful, I think, in assigning special or local causes for effects which, upon a broad view of the history of human thought, are generally discernible among all thinking people. A strong warrant for affirming the substantial identity of intellectual conformation among all races of civilized and thinking beings may be found in the fact that all the great philosophies show a progress from sensation, experience, and optimism to idealism, mysticism, and pessimism. Thus Greek philosophy, starting with the Ionic thinkers, ends with the Neo-Platonists and Skeptics. German thought, commencing with Lessing and Kant, has now a Hartmann for its chief exponent. English philosophy makes a progress from Locke and Hobbes to Berkeley and Hume. So Hinduism, from the Nature-worship of the Vedas, attains to the Skepticism of Sankhya and the Nihilism of Buddhism; and Hebrew thought, from the joyousness in creation which marks its earliest poetry, ends in the pessimism of Koheleth.

MISS LEYCESTER. A progress on similar lines of thought would be found to characterize not a few of the great philosophers of the world. For that matter, some such course is, from the nature of the human mind and its only possible mode of acquiring knowledge, inevitable. But one of the motive-influences of Hindu thought is pre-eminently worthy of praise. In directing its efforts to deliverance from pain it approved itself as humane, charitable, and sympathetic.

HARRINGTON. To my thinking the stress placed upon pain by Hindu thinkers, as well as by a large and increasing section of modern Europeans, as if it were an incongruous element in sentient existence, is utterly absurd. I am quite tired of sermons, treatises, and disquisitions of all kinds on the 'mystery of pain.' Pain itself does not seem to me nearly so great a mystery as the fact that so many thinkers regard it as mysterious.

ARUNDEL. Of course the source of the mystery is the incompatibility of the idea of pain with ordinary conceptions of the Divine omnipotence and beneficence.

HARRINGTON. No doubt. Men arbitrarily promulgate a dogma, devise a particular conception of Deity, and then, finding a large range of actual facts irreconcilable with their definition, they hasten to pronounce them mysterious. For my part I am heretic enough to wish to preserve the moral attributes of the Deity at the expense of some portion of His omnipotence. Hence I am prepared to concede that matter in some form or other must be eternal, and that allowing to God the power of moulding, shaping, qualifying, &c. I cannot conceive that He created or educed it out of nothing, as some thinkers, both Indian and Christian, say. Under such an hypothesis, and assuming the Divine beneficence, pain would no doubt involve a stupendous mystery. But suppose the Divine power limited by infinite wisdom, as Cudworth put it, or as I should rather say by inherent and indestructible properties of matter, then pain is not mysterious, but the most inevitable attendant on sentient existence. Conceive, *e.g.* such a complex organization as that of man's, and in the very conception pain as the effect of its disorders is postulated, as are also disease and death.

ARUNDEL. I do not deny a partiality for the line of thought you have just enounced, albeit it does border on the ill-defined limits which separate ortho- from hetero-doxy. But I should rather make the bounds of the Creator's power the self-imposed restraints of His own omniscient wisdom, instead of objective impossibilities in brute matter. Practically, the result would be the same, while in theory we should avoid the Manichæan dualism which would be the outcome of your own hypothesis.

MRS. HARRINGTON. But why did Hindu thought thus have an emotional instead of intellectual starting-point? It could not have been, I suppose, on account of their possessing a peculiarly sensitive physical organization, for I have always understood that the natives of India and the East are remarkably impassive and impervious to all manifestations of feeling.

HARRINGTON. I take it that we must attribute their inordinate stress on

The ills that flesh are heirs to,

more to metaphysical aptitudes than physical qualities. Once Hindu thought was started in a course of self-renunciation, its own super-subtle proclivity soon carried self-repression to the extremest possible limit. Moreover, pain from which they desired emancipation signified to them not merely the physical suffering we understand by the word, but every pronounced and obtrusive state whether of feeling or of consciousness. The Hindus as a race apprehended more clearly than any other the physiological truth that every emotion or intellectual perception, even those classed as pleasurable, carried beyond a certain limit induces suffering. This feeling, to which Shelley among English poets has given such distinct and sometimes piquant expression, was the root-thought of Hindu religion and philosophy, and serves to explain both the negation and pessimism which distinguished them.

MISS LEYCESTER. What seems remarkable is that the susceptibility to the ills of existence should have been conjoined in the Hindu mind with a theory of perpetual existence.

I should like some *rationale* of the Hindu stress on transmigration.

ARUNDEL. A still greater incongruity is presented in the coexistence in the same philosophy—for Buddhism is only the logical sequence of Hindu speculation—of the opposite phases of thought, of continuity of existence, and its absolute extinction.

TREVOR. On the contrary, one might have given rise to the other. It was the fact of innumerable successive births constituting the destiny of every man that gave the Nirvana of Buddhists and similar schemes of personal annihilation the enormous influence which it is evident they possessed. As to transmigration, more than one theory might be advanced for its currency in ancient thought. 1. It seems a transference to the individual of that perpetuity of life which men's experience convinced them was one great fact of the universe. The repugnance to future annihilation which Western and Christian teachers say is so influential among men, operated among Orientals in an opposite direction. That personal consciousness which we have learned to suppose incapable of perishing, the Oriental conceived impossible to have commenced. 2. The changes in nature and in certain natural products, animate and inanimate, supplied also an analogy of repeated migrations from one kind of life to another. 3. Possibly too the observed variations, mutabilities, &c. in the intellectual life of every thinker, as well as the ordinary growth of knowledge and experience, suggested another analogy to such introspective people as the Hindus.

MISS LEYCESTER. You have just said that transmigration of souls was a doctrine of Oriental thinkers. It seems likely in the future to occupy a foremost place in occidental schemes of thought. Heredity and evolution are merely modern forms of the same teaching.

HARRINGTON. You are indulging in one of your paradoxical generalizations, Florence.

MISS LEYCESTER. Not at all. The devout Hindu conceived himself to have descended through a long line of prior existences of various kinds. The modern hereditarian regards himself as the offspring mentally as well as physically

of a long succession of ancestors going as far back as the anthropoid ape, if not to still more rudimentary forms of life. No doubt the Hindu did not follow any prescribed order in his assumed progress from one life to another, while modern science makes such an order a material part of its theory; but this is only the difference between a crude, uninformed intuition and the elaborate systematization which pertains to modern science.

ARUNDEL. There is another difference, Miss Leycester. The Hindu conceived that it was an individual soul that thus passed from one existence to another, while the modern thinker, who is perhaps uncertain of possessing a soul as a distinct spiritual entity, regards himself as only a combination of inherited aptitudes and faculties. We may at least safely assert that the latter would repudiate the doctrine of transmigration with some degree of vehemence.

MISS LEYCESTER. Possibly, but his repudiation would not affect the facts of the case. Whether what I inherit from my forefathers be a peculiar combination of mental and physical qualities, or whether I choose to state the heredity in the ordinary form, that the soul I now possess once inhabited other living tenements seems to me a matter of but slight importance. Nor is there much difference between the Hindu and the Darwinian in respect of transmission of qualities through dumb animals. The latter is as eager as the former to trace the elementary germs of human feelings, passions, and habits in beings of a lower order.

HARRINGTON. A yet more vital distinction between the theories you have juxtaposited would be that the Hindu conception of soul implied in most cases (Buddhism being the most prominent exception) its immortality; whereas the Darwinian materialist, who derives it piecemeal from various ancestors and connects it indissolubly with bodily organization, must needs maintain its perishableness.

MISS LEYCESTER. In that respect I suppose I must allow a distinction.

ARUNDEL. While listening to Trevor's paper I was struck by the insistence of Hindu philosophy on knowledge and

on the emancipation of humanity by knowledge. I could not help contrasting the different idea of Christianity, which teaches freedom by virtue and moral practice. The latter, it appears to me, is an infinitely more wholesome doctrine for the bulk of humanity.

TREVOR. Your contrast is not well grounded. On the one hand, moral duty is enjoined in most schemes of Hindu thought quite as much as intellectual advance. On the other hand, you must not forget those passages in the New Testament in which the liberating power of knowledge is affirmed with no small emphasis. Take, *e.g.* the words of Christ. 'Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free,' and several passages with like implication in the Epistles. Moreover, the freedom obtainable by knowledge was a primary doctrine in Alexandrian and Neo-Platonic Christianity. Indeed, there are few general principles in Hindu thought which seem to me truer than this emancipation by knowledge. It is an assertion of the spiritual concentration, the sturdy self-reliance and mental independence which are some of the noblest fruits of knowledge.

The self-enthroned need fear no rival king.

HARRINGTON. For a professed Skeptic, Doctor, your encomium of knowledge is sufficiently enthusiastic. . . . But we have not yet discussed the most preposterous of the fruits of Hindu knowledge, as well as the most remarkable of all the products of Eastern speculation. I mean the Buddhist Nirvana. Nothingness as a future possible contingency and in the sense of infinite vacuum I can with some effort understand, but what I feel unable to comprehend is the positing nothingness as a condition attainable during a man's life.

TREVOR. The stages by which Nirvana was attained seem, roughly speaking, to have been the following:

1. We must remember that in Hindu as in every other philosophy existence begins in sensation, and thence arises or originates the phenomenal world.

2. Sensation matured and rarefied by intellect and imagination becomes an idealism which supplants and destroys its

parent, the result being the gradual disappearance of the phenomenal world.

3. The sole remaining subjective world of ideas is lastly submitted to other destructive agencies, and by devotion, contemplation, austerity, the sense of individuality is reduced to a hardly conscious mental vacuity. Both the outer and inner worlds have thus disappeared, and nothing is left but nothingness, or Nirvana.

HARRINGTON. But what a striking satire on knowledge and intellectual research is this reduction of a reasoning being to its lowest rational denomination, bringing it down in reality to the level of the most elementary forms of life; and what a Skeptical comment on the efficacy of knowledge to assume that its last phase is intellectual inanition and scarcely conscious life! Notwithstanding your remarks, I should be inclined to regard it as quite a hallucination.

TREVOR. So doing you would not be acting with your customary justice towards abnormal convictions. The object of the Buddhist, we must remember, was to attain a sort of spiritual and mental anæsthesia, and this object he pursued by all available means during the greater part of his life. With a knowledge of human, at least Oriental, nature that has never been surpassed, he deliberately and perpetually drugged himself with every species of intellectual anæsthetic, philosophical, religious, ascetic, volitional, he could possibly procure. The natural result was the attainment of a minimum of sensibility, which Europeans could hardly procure except by the aid of material anæsthetics—a stage of consciousness, *e.g.*, that might be temporarily induced by a dose of chloroform, 'so low that a received impression remains in consciousness unclassed; there is a passive reception of it, and an absence of the activity required to know it as such or such[1];' or—employing an illustration more familiar to most of us—Nirvana may be likened to that sweetly passive state of confused and waning consciousness, the gradually increasing perception of torpor which announces to the tired man the approach of healthy and welcome repose.

[1] Comp. 'Report of Consciousness under Chloroform,' in *Mind*, for October 1878, p. 558.

ARUNDEL. Miss Leycester has suggested a comparison of Buddhism and Darwinianism. Why not suppose that the forcible suppression of consciousness implied in Nirvana is a form of Atavism—the instinctive retrogression of our race to its primordial jelly-fish condition. . . . But perhaps I ought not to speak harshly of Nirvana in my own present semi-somnolent condition, for whether it be association with Buddhists or the three hours' length of our sitting, or else our long walk on the down, I feel the approach of that confused and waning consciousness which Dr. Trevor has so eloquently described as the harbinger of sleep. So I propose we close our discussion and incontinently adjourn.

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX A.

(Page 29.)

The chief technical terms and definitions of Greek Skepticism.

It would seem that Dr. Trevor in casual conversation greatly underestimated the number of technical terms pertaining to Greek Skepticism. The following are the amended tables contained in his common-place book, and even these he considers as far from exhaustive.

(1) *Terms of enquiry.*

ἡ ζητητική	ἐρώτησις
ἡ σκεπτική (τέχνη or ἀγωγὴ)	συνερωτᾶν
σκέψις	ἡ συνερώτησις
ἐπιζήτησις	ἐριστική
ἐπιμονὴ ζητήσεως	

(2) *Terms of denial.*

ἀπορητική	ἀντιμαρτύρησις
ἀντέμφασις	ἀντιλογία
ἀντίφασις	ἀντικείμενα
ἀπιστεῖσθαι	ἀντικαθίστασθαι
ἀντιδοξεῖν	ἀντιδιατάσσω
ἀποφάσεις σκεπτικαί	ἀντιδιαστέλλω
ἀπεκλογή	ἀντιδιαζεύγνυμι
ἀντίρρησις	ἀντιδιαλέγομαι

(3) *Terms of doubt or suspense.*

ἐποχή	ἀμφισβητήσιμος
ἐπέχειν	ἀπαρέμφατος
ἀπέχειν	ἀπορητικός
ἀδοξάστως	ἰσοκρατεῖν
ἀμφισβητέω	ἰσολογία
ἀμφοτερόβλεπτος	ἐφεκτική
ἀνταπορέω	Πυρρώνειος

(4) *Objects or results of Skepticism.*

ἀδιαφορία	ἀφασία
ἀδιαφωνία	ἀγνωσία (τῆς ἀληθείας)
ἀκαταληψία	ἀρρεψία
ἀταραξία	ἰσοσθένεια
ἀκινησία	μετριοπάθεια

(5) *Current phrases, definitions, &c., of Greek Skeptics.*

οὐ μᾶλλον or οὐδὲν μᾶλλον	ἐρωτᾶν λόγον
οὐδὲν ὁριστέον	πάντα ἐστὶν ἀκατάληπτα
τάχα	ἀκαταληπτέω
ἔξεστι	οὐ καταλαμβάνω
ἐνδέχεται	πάντα ἐστὶν ἀόριστα
ἐπέχω	παντὶ λόγῳ λόγος ἴσος ἀντίκειται
γνῶθι σεαυτόν	ἄριστον μέτρον
διάλληλος	μηδὲν ἄγαν
διαλογισμοί	μελέτη τὸ πᾶν

APPENDIX B.

(Page 111.)

On the School of Elea.

Of all schools of thought that have emerged in the history of philosophy, and that are able to claim in some sort 'a local habitation and a name,' none is more remarkable than that of Elea. In respect of its general influence on the thought of Europe, and its special relation to the philosophy of Italy, it may almost claim to be unique. It took its rise in the teaching of Xenophanes some five centuries before the Christian era. At that period Elea was a maritime town of some importance commercially, while in intellectual advance, in general culture and refinement, it might be termed the capital of the flourishing province of Magna Græcia. Indeed, the surrounding country is connected with Elea at this early period by remarkable intellectual affinities. There flourished for some centuries the Pythagorean philosophy—that marvellous compound of profound wisdom and puerile superstition, that heterogeneous conglomerate of pure transcendentalism, oriental theosophy and magical lore—whose teachers and eminent disciples were at one time so numerous that Fabricius collected the names of nearly two hundred who flourished in Magna Græcia or in the neighbouring island of Sicily.

But the purer idealism of the Eleatics is, in relation to the subsequent thought of Europe, more remarkable than the system of Pythagoras. From the thought-tendencies conjointly produced by Xenophanes, Parmenides, and Zenon, we seem able to trace in unintermittent succession the stream of European idealism, through Socrates, Plato, and their successors, the New Academy, the Neo-Platonists, the Christian Fathers, the Realistic Schoolmen, the Platonists of the Renaissance, the Idealist Free-thinkers of the same period, the German mystics and Kabbalists, down to its latest development of Hegelian transcendentalism. Of no other school of purely philosophic speculation could an equal proportion of enduring many-sided influences be affirmed.

The first stage in this marvellous evolution is that described in the text. Under Parmenides and Zenon the city of Elea enjoyed the rare position of being a free municipality, whose governing minds were philosophers. In contrast to the contempt, now so common, of politicians for philosophers—the men of action for the

men of thought, the ancients considered Elea as the best governed city of Magna Græcia, because its laws were devised by Parmenides. The nature of this philosophic *régime* we are only able to guess at. That its tendencies were in the direction of freedom we may well be certain, both from an examination of the Eleatic philosophy itself, and from the historical fact that its founders were regarded as the earliest teachers of Hellenic Free-thought. Nothing need be said here as to the tenets of Xenophanes and his successors, which have already been treated in the text, but it may be remarked that the transcendental teaching of the Eleatics, while undoubtedly constituting the most characteristic feature of the school, does not exhaust its philosophical importance. If we may credit an early tradition, Leukippos was an offshoot of the Eleatics, and as he is the accepted teacher of Demokritus, and (through him) of Epikouros, we have the remarkable fact that this early Hegelianism of Magna Græcia, like its modern German descendant, became subdivided into a right and left; the right maintaining the pure idealism of their teachers, the left transmuting it into—or deriving from its relation to the phenomenal world—certain atomistic or materialist theories. Granting the truth of this hypothesis, the Eleatic School becomes the progenitor, not only of the idealism of Hellenic philosophy, but also of its concrete and materialistic systems.

But the school of Elea is equally remarkable in its relation to the whole course of Italian philosophy. The characteristics and tendencies of Italian speculation have retained for upwards of two thousand years the impulse originally imparted to them by the Elean thinkers. A recent writer (Giuseppe Buroni '*Dell' Essere e del Conoscere, studii su Parmenide Platone e Rosmini*'), who has made it his object to trace the connection between the speculations of Parmenides and those of Hegel, terms the main principle of the former—the identity of thought and existence—'*il principio splendido e supremo dell' antica e nuova filosofia italica.*' Nor can it be said that this is an exaggeration. The modern school of Italian secular philosophy, together with the speculations of its mediæval theologians, is indissolubly united to the teaching of the Eleatics. The identity of thought and being, whatever its value philosophically or otherwise, may be said to be the primary article in the creed of Italian thinkers—the animating principle of all her highest thought. With the possible exception of England—insular in this as in other respects—no European country has kept its philosophic speculation within the same general lines so persistently as Italy. Whatever its occasional deflections from the

straight path of idealism—caused mostly by foreign influences—Italy has never been quite devoid of her own native product of transcendentalism; and for the most part the neighbourhood of Elea, Nola, Naples—towns on or adjoining the old seaboard of Magna Græcia—have furnished the larger contingent of such idealist thinkers. It is possible that this evolution of ontology may be due partly to the connection of Italian thought with the theological metaphysics and conclusions of the papacy; but inasmuch as Italian thinkers have never been wanting in independence, and their idealism is just as often employed in the interests of Scepticism as of Romanist dogma, this does not seem a sufficient explanation of the phenomenon. It would take too much time to detail the whole course of Italian idealism, from its first origin in the schools of Elea to the Hegelianism now dominant in all the Italian universities; but it may be pointed out that most of the schoolmen of Italian origin—*e.g.* Bonaventura, Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas—were men whose doctrines were not only leavened by but based upon ontological conclusions. The selfsame tendencies are markedly conspicuous in the free-thinking speculations of Giordano Bruno and the school of idealists with which he is allied. Bruno is besides a native of Nola, and on this ground claims the Eleatics as his own predecessors and fellow countrymen. His biographer, M. Bartholmess ('Jordano Bruno,' ii. p. 310), tells us that, 'every time he mentions the Eleatic School, it is with a kind of national pride.' But Bruno is only one of an illustrious band of Italian free-thinkers, who, in the 15th and 16th centuries were natives of the territory surrounding Elea, Naples, &c. Connected with the same district, of which it might be said, as Diogenes Laertius remarked of Elea, that 'it was capable of producing great men,' are the names of Valdez, Vanini, Telesius, Campanella, and Ochino—all thinkers in whom idealism, whether philosophical, religious, or both, is abundantly traceable.

Another offshoot, at least indirectly, of Elean idealism is found in the School of Platonists which flourished at Florence during the 15th century. The speculations of Plethon, Ficinus, Picus Mirandula, Patrizzi, though not immediately affiliated to the Eleatics, belong to the later developments of Hellenic transcendentalism, the original ancestor of which is unquestionably Parmenides of Elea. Nor is this by any means the last appearance in Italian philosophy of the same idealism: to quote the historian of Italian philosophy (L. Ferri, *Essai sur l'Histoire de la Philosophie en Italie*, vol. i. p. vi.), 'L'idéal, qui brilla jadis d'un si grand éclat dans le Platonisme de Ficin, de Léon l'Hébreu, de Pic de la

Mirandole et de François Patrizzi, a reparu, après une disparition plus que séculaire' (this may be doubted), 'dans les écrits de Rosmini, de Gioberti, et de Mamiani, pour développer, cette fois, dans l'esprit de l'Italie, non le sentiment du beau et les instincts esthétiques, mais la conscience du droit, et le désir réfléchi de la justice.'

In these words we have a succinct description of the present position of idealism in Italy, and the latest service which the thought-tendencies generated in Elea 500 B.C. have rendered to the country of their birth. Ontological speculation, it need not be said, is capable of assuming many aspects, and of subserving various and even conflicting interests. In the course of Italian Thought-evolution we find it sometimes employed as a weapon of ecclesiasticism to suppress freedom of thought, or as a basis on which to found harsh and unsustainable dogmas. It is therefore satisfactory to find that at present the teachings and thought-impulses of ancient Elea are in harmony with free speculation, and with the growth of civil and religious liberty in their native land. After centuries of struggle, bloodshed and suffering, Italy has arrived at the standpoint of philosophical liberty which Parmenides legislated for Elea two thousand three hundred years ago. She has allied idealism and introspective speculation with the mental liberty, which, when unhampered, these are calculated to produce. She has united—it may be hoped indissolubly—the speculations and political energies of her most ancient thinkers with her own most pressing needs as a modern European state—with free institutions, popular aspirations, and general progressive enlightenment. It is this remarkable *dénouement* which gives to the history of Italian idealism, from its first origin to the present day, the peculiar if not unique character of being a kind of philosophical romance.

APPENDIX C.

(Page 198.)

On some aspects of the character and life of Sokrates.

The estimate here advanced of the moral purity of Sokrates was arrived at after a full and impartial consideration of the whole question. Indeed, a substantial agreement on the point seems now to have been attained by all the historians of Greek philosophy, which might be described as consisting of partly the verdict of 'not-proven,' partly the conclusion of 'not probable.' The evidence adduced for the opposite conclusion is resolvable, (1) into an affectation of eccentricity not uncommon to independent thinkers. That Sokrates was apt to conceive himself and his mission under grotesquely humorous aspects is evidenced by his ironical-profession of being a gadfly, a torpedo fish, a hundred-headed Typhon, a professor, like his mother, of the maieutic art. Judging from these examples, it is not impossible that he may have symbolically represented himself as a kind of aged Cupid, or mediator between the sexes. Such a profession, casually made, might easily have been strained from its innocent to its degrading aspect, or, intended as it was metaphorically, might have been taken literally by such practical-minded hearers as Xenophon. Add to this that Sokrates was often described by personal friends as an eccentric, though his eccentricities are avowedly in the direction of asceticism and endurance; but it is quite conceivable how extravagant metaphor, arising from the contempt of an independent thinker for mere conventional opinions, might give rise to imputations of immoral conduct, which were far from being based on fact. (2) The possibility of a perverted inference from his teaching is further shown by his doctrine of Eros. Most writers agree that the Platonic Symposium is, of all Plato's writings, the most likely to have originated the charge of Sokrates' participation in the national sin of Greece. But the Symposium, with its doctrine of Eros, probably represents the mature and extreme stage of its author's constructive idealism. Every student of Plato knows how zealously he endeavoured to make his master the participator of his transcendental opinions, even when these had assumed a trenchantly dogmatic aspect wholly inconsistent with the Sokratic standpoint of Nescience. Thus in the Symposium he tries to implicate him with his own conception of Eros, as an unappeasable yearning for unattainable fruition in every sphere of human

desire. No doubt to Plato, in the very climax of his idealistic evolution, the doctrine of Eros assumed a somewhat wild and extravagant form. To his vivid imagination, his emotional sensibility, and intensely ardent temperament, no satiety was conceivable to any human appetite, whether grossly sensual or sublimely ideal. There was always a beyond, conceivable in imagination, however impossible of actual achievement. This was probably the principle that served to veil from some of the wisest of the Greeks the extravagances and loathsome excesses to which, on the side of the baser passions, it was liable. That Sokrates accepted the principle of Eros as unappeasable desire must be admitted. On the one hand, it was allied with, and in part founded upon, the conscious defect which he called his Nescience; on the other, it served as a poetic presentation of his desires for absolute truth, beauty, virtue; but he limited its scope and operation to these spiritual and intellectual yearnings. Now we can readily perceive how the larger and more ordinary conceptions of Eros may have induced a misconception of his language on the point, which was capable of increase both by his general habit of illustrating abstractions by concrete examples, and by his special propensity for ironically describing his intellectual passion for fair virtuous minds in the terms of corporeal affection. It should perhaps be added, as to this and other subject-matters on which there is some danger of misconceiving Plato's ideal and symbolical language, that Xenophon is a more trustworthy exponent of Sokrates than Plato. But on this point of his purity of life the testimony of the 'Memorabilia' is complete and unexceptionable.

(3) But the most decisive among the indirect arguments against the alleged immorality of Sokrates arises from its incompatibility with his mission. Above aught else, Sokrates was a teacher of self-renunciation, both mental and physical. He was a philosophic John the Baptist, preaching self-mortification and practising it—if not on locusts and wild honey, upon some approach to that spare diet. Physical self-renunciation was the necessary counterpart and complement of the philosophical Nescience, the intellectual humility which he constantly advocated. That his mission achieved a measure of success is in part proved by his martyrdom. But this fact is fatal to any reliable imputation on his moral conduct. Such a flagrant inconsistency on the part of a preacher of asceticism would neither have been unnoticed nor unreprehended by his critics. Indeed, men are unusually keen-sighted in detecting, and full-voiced in condemning, the aberrations or shortcomings of ethical missionaries, and the history of their prominent teachers

and political leaders shows that the Greeks were especially sensitive to imputations of private conduct inconsistent with their public professions. Nor was it only on the subject of self-mortification that his alleged immorality conflicted with the teaching of Sokrates. All his energies, tendencies, and predilections were distinctly intellectual. The aim of his teaching was to mould and fashion fair virtuous minds. Physical manly beauty, however much he might, in common with the rest of his fellow-countrymen, have valued it, was without corresponding qualities a shrine without a deity, a body without a soul. But this stress on intellectualism and ethical excellence renders the vices attributed to him absolutely inconceivable, except on an hypothesis that would make the 'wisest of the Greeks' the most hypocritical and self-perjured among the sons of men. Add to this his severe habit of self-enquiry, his vivid realization of conscience until it assumed the form of an attendant *daimon* whose prohibitions were for him inviolable and divine, and the improbability of his assumed guilt reaches a climax difficult to overstate.

Turning to the direct arguments on the point, we are met by the remarkable fact that these accusations were not made during his lifetime, and formed no part of his indictment before the Dikastery. Now, on the assumption that there existed some ground for the charge, or even that a scandalous rumour of his guilt was widely prevalent, such an omission is quite inconceivable. The accusation of corrupting the Athenian youth seems to have clung to him during the greater part of his life. Aristophanes adduces it in the 'Clouds' just as pointedly as Meletos and Anytos before the Dikasts. But in both cases there is no attempt to corroborate the charge by any immoral conduct on the part of Sokrates. Aristophanes, as Zeller has pointed out, would have only been too eager to avail himself of an accusation which, while it brought to a practical issue the ill-effects of Sokratic ratiocination, was peculiarly in harmony with his own broad comedy, while the indictment of Meletos and his fellow plaintiffs would have derived untold strength had they been able to substantiate his immoral teaching by his own immoral conduct.

So far, indeed, is Aristophanes from being aware of any laxity in the life of Sokrates, that he tries to turn to ridicule his continence, his power of physical endurance, and his mental serenity. This is how the 'Clouds' represent to Strepsiades the aims of the Sokratic teaching: 'How blessed among Athenians and Greeks will you be, if you have a good memory and much sophistical wisdom, and endurance dwell in your soul; if you are never

tired whether by standing or walking; if you do not suffer much by cold, nor are eager to break your fast, and keep away from wine and gymnastics, and the other follies; and, as becomes a clever man, consider this the best—to triumph by deeds and words, and by contending with your tongue' ('Nubes,' 413–419). Whatever may be thought of this exposition of Sokratic wisdom, it certainly does not convey the idea of a self-indulgent teacher, nor one who was accustomed to pander to the most depraved passions of his nation. We are almost inclined to pity the straits to which Aristophanes was reduced when he was compelled to devise or assign ludicrous aspects to the virtues of Sokrates, instead of discovering some ethical deficiency on which to base his buffoonery. Moreover, the testimony of Aristophanes is of peculiar value, inasmuch as it covers the earlier life of Sokrates, just as the accusation of Meletos and Anytos comprehend the later years of his life. Some writers have thought that the alleged immorality of Sokrates was a characteristic of his youthful years, but their opinion seems sufficiently rebutted by the presentation of him given in the 'Clouds.' The impossibility of Aristophanes being aware of anything detrimental to his moral purity is only equalled by the further impossibility that knowing, he should have forborne to make use of it. The testimony thus adduced on the part of an unwilling witness is confirmed by the Platonic 'Apology,' and the 'Memorabilia' of Xenophon, and it is on these, the only contemporary authorities on the question, that its decision must ultimately rest.

Since this work was sent to press the author has had opportunities of reading some recent researches on the perennial theme of Sokrates, his life, teaching, and death, but they have only served to confirm the conclusions he had already come to on the subject. Among recent contributions to the subject may be mentioned Signor Bonghi's paper in the *Nuova Antologia* (July 15, 1880), entitled 'Socrate nella difesa scrittane da Platone.' Although this article is confined to the consideration of the Platonic 'Apology,' it incidentally reopens several questions which it might be feared English scholars have regarded as finally determined by Mr. Grote's estimate of Sokrates. Signor Bonghi lays some stress on what, though generally acknowledged by critics, is not sufficiently insisted on, viz. the remarkable agreement between the 'Clouds' and the Platonic 'Apology' as to the place which Sokrates occupied in the estimation of his fellow citizens, though he shares the opinion of most modern scholars that the 'Apology' of Plato must not be accepted as the actual defence made

by Sokrates. What Plato did, he says, was not to alter, change, or vary the substance of the real 'Apologia,' but to recast it, possibly in some slight measure rearranging its subject-matters and clothing its sentiments in his own poetic diction. Touching the purely legal aspect of Sokrates's condemnation, Signor Bonghi confesses his inability to perceive the precise mode of his contravention of the law of Athens, unless it were his declaration of the divine origin of his *daimon*, which was held equivalent to the erection of a private shrine entirely independent of and unrelated to the national deities. This is indeed the best solution of the question, and it does not seem much weakened by what is equally true, that men like Euthyphron and Xenophon, although knowing the relation of Sokrates to his *daimon*, still professed themselves unable to determine how he had violated the laws. A moot point of Sokratic enquiry has always been the possible effect as a contributory cause of the death of Sokrates, the demokratic reaction after the suppression of the Thirty Tyrants. This opens up a large question which it would be impossible to discuss here. Signor Bonghi lays some stress on these political con-causes, more than, as it seems to the author, they are able to bear. The chief objection against any undue weight on the political conditions of the time, is found in the fact that they are unnecessary as a reason for the condemnation of Sokrates. The cause which appeared sufficient to Plato and to Sokrates ought to suffice us, and that was none other than the relentless application of his elenchus, combined with the divine character he attributed to his *daimon*. Signor Bonghi is inclined to credit the tradition of the penitence of the Athenians for the death of their great mentor, and the unhappy fates which, according to some writers, befel his accusers. As a matter of sentiment, most persons would readily accept the tradition, which is indeed by no means utterly devoid of probability; but, regarded as a matter of fact, we must admit that there is little direct evidence for such an opinion. Signor Bonghi does not contribute any new materials towards the decision of the question. His chief reasons for believing that there was a change of sentiment in the Athenian mind being (1) a passage in Isokrates ('De Permut.' § 19), which, without naming Sokrates, mentions an angry and baseless decision of the Athenians for which they were afterwards eager to atone by persecuting its originators; (2) the smallness of the majority by which the condemnation of Sokrates was secured; and (3) the statue mentioned by Diogenes Laertius, which the Athenians subsequently erected to his memory. On Grote's decision of the point Signor Bonghi quotes with approval the judgment of Herman ('De Socratis accusa-

toribus,' p. 8): 'Scilicet Grotius id, in quo Diodorus, Plutarchus, Diogenes Laertius, Themistius, Augustinus, Suidas consentiunt, quia auctore careat, credere recusat, nos sibi auctori credere vult, Athenienses non pœnituisse.'

APPENDIX D.

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On the chronological succession of the later Greek Skeptics, extracted from the 'De philosophorum Scepticorum successionibus' of Dr. P. Leander Haas.

I. Tabella Philosophorum Scepticorum ex Temporum Ratione composita.

I. Sceptici Antiquiores.

	B.C.
Pyrrho	365–265
Pyrrhonis discipuli: Eurylochus, Philo Atheniensis, Hecatæus Abderites, Timon Phliasius, Nausiphanes, Teius.	
Timon Phliasius	325–235
Timonis discipuli: Dioscurides Cyprius, Nicolochus Rhodius, Euphranor Seleucius, Praylus Trojanus, Xanthus, Timonis filius.	
Pyrrhoniorum cum Academicis post Arcesilai obitum conjunctio.	
Euphranor Seleucius	235
Eodem fortasse tempore fuerunt Numenius, Mnaseas, Philomelus.	
Eubulus Alexandrinus	150
Ptolemæus Cyrenæus	150–120
Sarpedon.	
Heraclides Tarentinus	120–90
Ænesidemus Cnossius	90–60
Post Ænesidemum defecit successio.	

II. Sceptici Recentiores.

	A.D.
Zeuxippus Politanus	70
Zeuxis Tarentinus	70–95
Agrippa, recentiorum Scepticorum parens.	
Antiochus Laodicenus	95–120
Antiocho æqualis Apellas.	

	A.D.
Theodas Laodicenus	105–135
Menodotus Nicomediensis	120–150

In eandem incidit ætatem Theodosius Tripolitanus.

Herodotus Tarsensis	156–180
Sextus Empiricus	180–210
Saturninus Cythenas	210–240

Dionysii Ægiensis ætas ignota est.

(The age of Favorinus, whose works are supposed on good grounds to have been the sources whence Diogenes Laertius drew his knowledge of the Skeptics, is very doubtful. Dr. Haas places him after A.D 150. See his work, p. 87 note.)

II. Index illorum Scepticorum quos Libros scripsisse constat vel ipsis Librorum Titulis servatis vel aliis Scriptorum antiquorum Testimoniis.

I. Scepticorum antiquiorum.

Pyrrho nihil scripti reliquit.

Hecataeus: Περὶ Ὑπερβορέων—Αἰγυπτιακά (περὶ τῆς τῶν Αἰγυπτίων φιλοσοφίας)—περὶ τῆς ποιήσεως Ὁμήρου καὶ Ἡσιόδου (?)

Naasiphanes.

Timon: Σίλλοι (ἴαμβοι?)—Πύθων—ἰνδαλμοί—περὶ αἰσθήσεων—πρὸς τοὺς φυσικούς—περὶ Ἀρκεσιλάου δείπνου—ποιήματα καὶ ἔπη—satyri—triginta comoediae—sexaginta tragoediae.

Numenius, Mnaseas, Philomelus.

Ptolemaeus.

Heraclides: Περὶ τῆς ἐμπειρικῆς αἱρέσεως—Commentarii in omnes Hippocratis libros.

Ainesidemus: Πυῤῥωνείων λόγων ὀκτώ—κατὰ σοφίας—περὶ ζητήσεως.

Cassius.

II. Scepticorum recentiorum.

Zeuxis: περὶ [δ]ιττῶν λόγων—Commentarii in omnes Hippocratis libros.

Agrippa.

Antiochus.

Apellas: De Agrippa.

Theodas: Εἰσαγωγή—κεφάλειον (κεφάλαια).

Menodotus: Σεβήρῳ ἑνδεκα—adhortatio ad artes discendas (?).

Theodosius: Ὑπομνήματα εἰς τὰ Θευδᾶ κεφάλαια—κεφάλαια Σκεπτικὰ —εἰς τὸ ἔαρ (1).

Herodotus.

Dionysius: Διατυπώσεις.

Sextus Empiricus: [Πυρρώνειαι Ὑποτυπώσεις ἢ σκεπτικὰ ὑπομνήματα —Πρὸς τοὺς μαθηματικοὺς ἀντιῤῥητικοὶ—τὰ ἐμπειρικὰ ὑπομνήματα —περὶ ψυχῆς—περὶ τῆς σκεπτικῆς ἀγωγῆς—τὰ ἰατρικὰ ὑπομνήματα. Of these works of Sextus only the first two are extant.]

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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